

FROM HEAVEN OR FROM MEN, *WHICH?*

BY
HOMER GIFFORD

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INTRODUCTION

The lessons in this book are "Articles" written for publication in The Bakersfield Californian. These articles were published weekly and went into the homes of 55,000 people. The Shafter Church of Christ paid for them to be published. Because of requests by many people, these articles are being printed in book form with the hope that they may be used to glorify God and to spread the gospel.

I believe the time has come that we as preachers and teachers need to as never before teach the TRUTH in its simple purity because of the confusion and corruption caused by false teaching. It is my prayer that many precious souls will learn the truth and be led to our Lord Jesus Christ and His Church. This is the purpose of this book.

Acknowledgement and appreciation is given for the help received from many people and other sources without which this book would not have been written.

Thanks is given to my heavenly Father for all of these and for His precious Word.

This book is dedicated sincerely to all honest seekers of truth.

Homer L. Gifford

THE PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

Shortly after Betty and I married, we moved to Shafter, California to work with the local church. It was during this time that we first met brother Homer Gifford, who preached for the church at McFarland. Later he also served the church in Shafter. While there he wrote the articles that appear in this book.

Some two years ago we had the opportunity to visit the Haskell Hanes and the Westside Church of Christ in Bakersfield, California. While there we got to spend some time with Homer and Hazel Gifford who are members of the Westside congregation. Although retired from full-time preaching, brother Gifford, along with his wife, is still active in the Lord's work.

Brother Gifford originally wrote these articles for "The Bakersfield Californian" newspaper. They were then compiled and printed in a paperback edition. Now we are happy to present them in this form through which they will be even more widely circulated.

We are thankful for brother Gifford's life-long work in the Lord's vineyard and we pray that God will continue to bless him and his wife. We pray that as you read this material it will be the means of helping you to learn the truth and to obey it.

J. C. Choate
Church of Christ
Winona, Mississippi
January 29, 1988

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GOD'S CHOICE OR MAN'S CHOICE, WHICH?

God created man a creature of choice. Man has the power to choose life or death; good or evil; right or wrong (Deut. 30:19). The responsibility rests upon man to accept God's way or his own. When man learns that God's way is not like man's way (Isa. 55:8). God did not leave it up to man to plan his own course in life. Even though man is a creature of violation, he does not have the power to **DIRECT** his own steps (Jer. 10:23). Joshua said, "Choose ye this day whom you will serve" (Josh. 24:15).

There are two masters for man to serve (Matt. 6:24): Christ or Satan. Man is serving one or the other. God does not force man to serve either one, but it is God's choice for man to serve His Son whom he sent to save man.

It was God's choice to save man by the Gospel of Christ which Paul said is "The power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). Paul, also said in I Cor. 1:21 "that it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." The Gospel therefore **MUST** be preached so all will have an opportunity to choose to obey it and be saved or choose not to **OBEY** it and be lost (I Thess. 1:8, 9).

It was God's choice for His Son to build **ONE** church (Matt. 16:18) of which Christ is its Saviour (Eph. 5:23); also, of which he is the **HEAD** (Eph.

1:22, 23; Col. 1:18). Man has the choice of being a member of Christ's church or man's churches.

It was and is God's choice for man for all to walk in UNITY (Eph. 4:1-5) and not be divided into two or three hundred bodies or churches (I Cor. 1:10; 12:20; John 17:20-21). Man's choice is to build his own church; teach his own doctrine; and by so doing, destroy Christ's church (Matt. 15:19). Satan has through the history of the world counterfeited everything that God has done. He has his false prophets, christs, apostles, and ministers (II Cor. 11:13-15). Man has the choice of accepting Christ's church or man's.

Friends, which is your choice — to follow Christ or Satan? To belong to Christ's church or man's church? To follow the doctrine of Christ (which is The Word) or the doctrines of men? To promote unity or cause division? Be not deceived — choose you this day whom you will serve.

GOD'S WAY vs. MAN'S WAY

God by His divine love and mercy, has provided the way by which man **MUST** walk. For man cannot direct his steps or way (Jer. 10:23). The prophet Isaiah knew this was so, and he warns man not to follow his own ways. Notice what the prophet said, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord, For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8, 9).

Man doesn't have the ability to guide himself, therefore, the need of letting God direct his paths. Jeremiah instructed Israel to "Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths. Where is the **GOOD WAY**, and **WALK** therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, we will not walk therein" (Jer. 6:16). David stated that the Lord would lead man, "He leadeth me in the **PATH OF RIGHTEOUSNESS** for his name sake" (Psa. 23:3).

Christ also knew that man did not have the ability to guide himself, so He told the apostles that He would send the Holy Spirit. "And when he is come he will guide you into **ALL THE TRUTH**" (John 16:13).

When man refuses to be guided by the Divine Word of God, or to be governed by the authority of

Jesus Christ, he is under the anathema of God. Notice! Paul's statement in Gal. 1:8, 9, "But though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you, let him be accursed" (anathema). It seems today many people care little what God has said, and pay no heed to the warnings He has given. Paul says in Rom. 16:17, "Now I beseech you, brethern, MARK them which cause division and offenses CONTRARY to the DOCTRINE which you have LEARNED; and avoid them." Again Paul said, "But God hath chosen the FOOLISH things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the WEAK things of the world to confound the things that are mighty" (I Cor. 1:27-29).

Man's way of thinking is to do big things and think on high things. But not so with God (I Cor. 1: 19, 20, 25). We learn in the Bible that God's way of saving man is different, than the way man teaches people to be saved. Let us notice God's way. Jesus after He was raised from the dead, and had received ALL AUTHORITY instructed His apostles to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized SHALL BE SAVED" (Mark 16:15, 16). Again Christ said, "Repent and be BAPTIZED EVERY ONE OF YOU in the name of Jesus Christ FOR the REMISSION OF SINS" (Acts 2:38).

But man rejects God's way of salvation, for man says, that baptism is not essential to salvation.

Man says, just believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and accept Him as your personal Saviour. Friends, can't you see the difference in God's WAY and man's ways? Beloved, you had better listen to God and accept His way, for He is right and man is WRONG.

INDISPUTABLE BIBLE PROOF!

The Bible is or is not the divine Word of God. Where is the man or men that will deny it — those who are so foolish as to say that the Bible is not what it claims to be. Man must first disprove that the Bible is not so and prove that there is no God! Man will also have to prove that Jesus Christ was not born of a virgin; and did not live; did not die on the cross; and, was not raised from the dead. The Bible declares these things to be so. Where is the man that will dare deny that Jesus lived and died for man's sins? There is too much evidence in secular and Biblical history to be successfully denied. Therefore, this being true, man has no alternative but to accept, believe, and obey His divine injunctions. Christ was given all **AUTHORITY** in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:22, 23). Since this is true, whatsoever Christ has commanded **MUST BE ACCEPTED AND OBEYED** without any reservation.

Christ and His apostles plainly and positively taught that for one to be saved they **MUST BE IN CHRIST**, where salvation is. In II Tim. 2:10, we read "Therefore, I endure all things for the elects sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is **IN Christ Jesus** with eternal glory." It follows that those that are **NOT IN CHRIST** are not saved and will be lost.

Let me point out some things that are **IN**

Christ. (1) Redemption (Eph. 1:7). (2) Forgiveness (Col. 1:14). (3) Eternal life (I John 5:11). (4) All spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3). (5) A new creature (II Cor. 5:17). (6) The Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13). (7) Salvation (II Tim. 2:10). (8) Children of God (John 3:5). If all these are in Christ, we can understand why it is so important for one to be in Christ!

Christ tells us in John 14:6 that, "He is the Way, the Truth, and Life; no man can come unto the Father but by Me." It stands without saying that only those who have entered Christ are in the Way that leads to God; have embraced the Truth; and, can enjoy spiritual life — for "this life is in His Son" (I John 5:11).

First, let me say that the ONLY ONES who will be saved are those who are IN Christ. According to the Bible, the ONLY WAY one can ENTER INTO CHRIST is by baptism! This is not a debatable question. Paul settled that matter 1900 years ago when he plainly wrote, "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized INTO Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4). Again Paul says, "For as many of you have been baptized INTO Christ have PUT ON Christ" (Gal. 3:27). See also I Cor. 12:13.

Therefore, the UNBAPTIZED are not in the Way; have not known the TRUTH; are not in possession of spiritual LIFE; and, have never entered the DOOR. They are without HOPE — if we “HOPE in Christ” (Eph. 1:12; I Cor. 15:19). Out of Christ men are LOST “having NO HOPE and WITHOUT GOD in the world,” Paul says in Eph. 2:12.

There is no revealed way to enter INTO Christ except to be BAPTIZED INTO Him. These FACTS cannot be successfully DENIED.

TEACH ABOUT AUTHORITY?

God is the source of ALL AUTHORITY in Christianity. God does not govern men today by His personal or direct authority, but has delegated authority into the hands of His Son (Matt. 28:18; 17:5; Heb. 1:1). Jesus Christ has ALL AUTHORITY there is NO authority left for men! In Deuteronomy Moses said, that God would send a prophet like him. Notice! “And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will NOT HEAR that prophet, SHALL BE DESTROYED FROM AMONG THE PEOPLE” (Deut. 18:18; Acts 3:23).

Therefore, man has no alternative but to submit to the authority of Christ. Christ called twelve men as His ambassadors to take the message of salvation to all nations — to every creature. But they only spoke as they were guided by the Holy Spirit. They spoke by the authority of Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; John 16:13). Friends, there is not one place found in Holy writ where God, or Christ ever delegated any authority to the Holy Spirit. For he could instruct or guide the apostles only as God or His Son directed him to speak. Listen to what John said, “But when He, the Spirit of Truth (the truth giving Spirit) comes, He will guide you into all the truth — the whole, full truth. Notice! “For He will not speak His own message — on His own authority — but He will tell what ever He hears (from the Father). He will give the message that has been given to Him, and He will announce and declare

to you the things that are to come — that will happen in the future,”

Men talk of being led and guided and controlled by the direct operation of the Spirit. Such men talk blindly and madly. Many have claimed this down through the ages. They are men who have been deceived by wicked and designing imposters.

Man today that is led by the Spirit is led by the truth. And the man who walks not according to the teachings of the apostles, walks not according to the Spirit. The man who teaches men to disobey the plain commandments of the apostles cannot be guided by the Spirit that inspired them to proclaim these commandments. The same Spirit which led the apostles to proclaim the truth, will NOT LEAD anyone else to IGNORE or to disobey TRUTH. May I ask by what authority doest thou the things that you DO IN RELIGION? Why not do like Peter said, “If any man speak let him speak as the oracles of God” (I Pet. 4:11).

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT "TRUTH?"

In the gospel of John, 18:38, Pilate asked, "What is TRUTH?" Let Christ answer this question. In John 17:17, Jesus said, "Sanctify them through thy TRUTH, thy WORD is TRUTH." Again in John 8:32, Jesus said, "And ye shall know the TRUTH and the TRUTH shall make you free." From these scriptures one can easily see that without TRUTH one cannot be saved! But some are saying that TRUTH is relative, subject to modification and change. TRUTH is ABSOLUTE! Relevant for all ages. What was TRUTH nineteen hundred years ago is TRUTH today as far as Christianity is concerned.

Christ said, "That God's WORD is TRUTH — and TRUTH is that by which man is made free from sin." Therefore, the necessity of OBEYING the TRUTH. Sanctification is by TRUTH — purification is by TRUTH (I Pet. 1:22-23). TRUTH is that by which all people must be guided in Christianity. Any religion that is not founded upon TRUTH — guided by TRUTH — in their worship (John 4:24), then service to God is vain (Rom. 6:17). For every religious act done, there must be a "thus sayeth the Lord." Christ — and Christ alone — has the authority to command and man must obey (Luke 6:46). How can anyone think that they can set up their own system of religion, and then expect the Lord to accept it, when it is not in harmony with His Word or

authorized by Him? (Acts 3:22). Truth is not elastic, nor can it be changed to suit the ideas of men. Man is commanded not to add to or take from the Word of God (Rev. 22:18-19). The anathema of God rests upon those that preach or obey another gospel (Gal. 1:6-7).

WHEN DOES GOD SEND A STRONG DELUSION?

The religion of Jesus Christ is revealed in the New Testament. Which when men believe and accept without anything being added or subtracted will save them from sin.

People today are not satisfied with what is revealed in the Bible by the Spirit for they don't accept the Bible as the divine Word of God, nor do they accept it as being relevant and absolute for the guidance of people today!

At the time Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica, there were some Christians in that city who had been listening to some false teachers, for in so doing they could be deceived. NOTICE! What Paul said to them, "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him (false teacher) whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders (miracles), and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." Paul is saying to those people that if you don't believe the TRUTH, God's Word and then, for this cause (what cause? Because they didn't believe the truth, but believed those false teachers) — and for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a LIE; That all might be

damned who believe not the TRUTH, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” Beloved, when people persist in listening to false teachers, and believe what they teach, God will give them up, or let them believe what they want to. God doesn’t force people to believe and obey Him if they want to believe a LIE and be damned. God does not keep them from doing it, but they will be lost by so doing. Beloved, this is positive proof that people cannot believe everything they hear religiously!

In Matt. 24:24 Christ says, “For there shall arise false christs, and false prophets (teachers) and shall show great signs and wonders (miraculous power); insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” Notice verse 23, “Then if any man shall say unto you, lo, here is Christ, or there; **BELIEVE IT NOT.**” There are many precious souls who do not accept the WARNING of Christ and His apostles.

For in the last two years I know many Christians whose minds have been deluded by those who claim to be scholars (intellectual) who have deceived many by their lies.

They say that all scholars and gospel preachers in the past didn’t have the ability or knowledge to teach the truth. That there is no such thing as an established church! That the Bible is not an authoritative book! That you can believe anything in

religion, and fellowship all religious people if you believe that it is alright to, do so! Beloved, these are ALL LIES. For not a one of them can be substantiated or proved by the Word of God. Therefore, all who have believed and are practicing them have received a delusion and will be damned by so doing.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT AUTHORITY?

Today, all of the trouble, the rebellion, and disturbances in the world is brought about because people are rejecting authority — in government, the schools, the homes, and in religion. When people reject AUTHORITY in any organization there will be disaster — Religion is no exception.

Christ was asked, “By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?” Every religious organization is governed by authority from some source. It comes from God or Satan, WHICH? It comes from one or the other, for there are only two sources from which authority is received.

There are two kinds of authority: Primary authority, and delegated authority. If there be any authority in Christianity, its source must inhere in its system. It must carry its credentials in its own bosom.

Authority is of two kinds. First: Primary authority, which grows out of the relation of those who have the right to command and those whose duty it is to obey. Second: Delegated authority. This is the right to command and enforce obedience which can be given to another by the party holding the primary authority. The fountain of all primary authority in Christianity is God. We are His and He made us; we

are the creatures of His hands and the product of His intelligence. He is our Maker, our Preserver, and our bountiful Benefactor, and has, therefore, the ABSOLUTE right to command, and it is our ABSOLUTE duty to OBEY. But God has rarely seen fit to govern men by his personal and primary authority. But has delegated authority to others, and rules by His representatives.

The first delegated authority in Christianity was from God to His Son. Jesus said, "All power (authority) is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). In Heb. 1:1, "hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." Again in Matt. 17:5, "This is MY beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased HEAR YE HIM." Therefore, those that will not hear Jesus Christ, or be governed by His authority will be LOST!

ARE CHRISTIANS UNDER LAW?

This is a pertinent question, but not a new one. One reason for not wanting to believe that Christians are under LAW, is because LAW MUST BE OBEYED. Therefore, if they contend or believe that they are not under law, they can believe and do anything they desire to do. This is the easy way out so they think. But HOW WRONG THEY ARE!

God has always demanded OBEDIENCE to His Divine laws. Without LAW or AUTHORITY chaos would reign.

In the sermon on the mount, where Jesus laid down the foundation principles for His coming kingdom, the Master unequivocally declared that OBEDIENCE to the Gospel is the condition of acceptance with God. Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that DOETH the WILL of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). Both Testaments emphasize the absolute necessity of OBEDIENCE — He became the author of eternal salvation, unto all them that OBEY Him (Heb. 5:8). There are some of these modern preachers and teachers that have gone so far as to say there is NO LAW for the disciples of Christ. They said, "Christ died to free man from the Mosaic law, as if such freed man from ALL law. But this does not necessarily follow as we shall see.

Paul in the book of Romans and Galatians is making a contrast between the Old and the New Covenant, the superiority of the New way of life which comes by faith in Christ Jesus, and not by the law of Moses or any man-made law (Heb. 8:7-13). If Paul is saying that Christians are not under law, he contradicted himself. NOTICE what he says in Rom. 7:22, "I DELIGHT in the LAW OF GOD after the inward man." Again Paul says in Rom. 8:2, "For the LAW of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Question: Could man be FREE if he rejected the LAW the Spirit has set forth in the Word of God which he inspired through the apostles? But again we read in I Cor. 9:21, these words, "To them that are without law (the Gentiles) as without law, (being not without LAW TO GOD, But UNDER THE LAW OF CHRIST), that I might gain them that are without law." Paul plainly teaches that man is UNDER LAW TO CHRIST. Therefore cannot be saved if he does not obey Christ's LAW. Again in Gal. 6:2, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the LAW of Christ." Now, I know that Paul does not contradict himself, for he would not teach that man is not under any law, and then turn right around and teach that man MUST OBEY THE LAW OF CHRIST. Such a statement is unadorned FOOLISHNESS!

Friends, Paul is not the only one that teaches that man is under law. James in his epistle says in Jas. 1:25, "Whosoever looketh into the PERFECT

LAW of liberty, and continueth therein — If ye fulfill the ROYAL LAW — So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the LAW OF LIBERTY” (Jas. 2:8, 12). I challenge anyone to DENY that these scriptures are not so. Those who pervert the Word of God are under the anathema of God.

Beloved, all the inspired writers taught that Christians are under the New Covenant, the law of Christ (I Cor. 9:21; Rom. 8:1, 2; Jas. 1:25), which He gave for His people today. Christ has ALL AUTHORITY — God speaks through Him — And whosoever will not hear Him shall be destroyed from the people (Acts 3:22, 23). He is the author of eternal salvation unto ALL THAT OBEY HIM (Heb. 5:9).

Friends, study your Bible and believe and obey what it says, for it is right and cannot be wrong.

WHAT LAW ARE CHRISTIANS UNDER TODAY?

(Lesson One)

This is a very pertinent question for there is a lot of controversy over which law the people of God are under today. There is no question as to what law the people of God were under in the Old Testament times.

God sent Moses down to Egypt to deliver His people out of bondage. Pharaoh finally let the Israelites go, and after they had crossed the Red Sea they came to Mt. Sinai. In Exodus 20:1, 2, we have these words. "And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee, (the Israelites) out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." It is very important that we notice TO WHOM God was speaking. He was speaking to ISRAEL those that had been delivered from bondage. Now let us turn to Deut. 5:1-4. NOTICE! to whom Moses was speaking. He called all Israel — "Hear O Israel — I speak in your ears — the Lord made this covenant with US (children of Israel) — Not with OUR Fathers — but with US — all of US that are alive this day." These statements are positive proof that the Old Law was given to the Israelites ONLY, not to the whole world.

In Jer. 31:31 we have the promise of a New Covenant that God was going to give, and it would not be LIKE the Old Covenant. In Heb. 8:13, NOTICE! "In that He saith, A NEW COVENANT,

He hath made the FIRST old, NOW that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to VANISH AWAY.” The Old Covenant had served its purpose and Paul tells us in Eph. 2:15, 16 “Having ABOLISHED in His flesh the enmity, even the law (or covenant) of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain ONE NEW MAN, so making peace.” Now notice what Paul is saying in Col. 2: 14-16, “Blotting out the hand writing (Ten Commandments) of ordinances that was AGAINST US, which was contrary to US (Christians), and took it (the Law) out of the way, nailing it (the Law) to His cross.” Now turn and read II Cor. 3:6, 7. Paul is saying that the Old Covenant or law, with all of its ordinances, statutes, and commandments which were written and engraven in stones (the Ten Commandments were the only words that were engraven in stone), were DONE AWAY.”

Therefore, those that claim that they are keeping the law (Old Covenant) are like the Jews that had a “VEIL over their faces.” But Paul says, “Which VEIL is DONE AWAY in Christ.”

In Rom. 10:4 Paul says, “For Christ is the END of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” Those therefore, that teach that the Old Law is still in force just DON’T believe what Paul spoke by inspiration and that the Old Law was nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14). Jesus also said in Matt. 5:17, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the

prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” For verily I say (not Moses) unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, TILL ALL BE FULFILLED.” Christ fulfilled the law as He said He did. For Paul said that when Christ came that was the END.

WHAT LAW ARE CHRISTIANS UNDER TODAY?

(Lesson Two)

In our first article we pointed out that the Old Covenant was given to the children of Israel. That it was not given to the Gentile world. Paul said that Christ abolished it — nailed it to His cross (Col. 2: 14). Christians are not therefore under the Old Covenant or law. But Christians are under the New Covenant of which Christ is Mediator (Heb. 9:15). The New Covenant could not be in force, or binding until Christ died (Heb. 9:16).

On the day of Pentecost the New Covenant or law was given. The apostles began to use the keys of the kingdom, and to give Christ's law, and bind that law upon the people (Matt. 16:19). NOTICE! What Jesus said to His apostles! "Whatsoever thou shalt **BIND** on earth SHALL be **BOUND** in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt **LOOSE** on earth SHALL BE **LOOSED** in heaven." Jesus also said in John 16:13, "That the Holy Spirit would **GUIDE** (the apostles) in **ALL TRUTH**." Paul points out that this is what happened in II Tim. 3:16, 17, "That the scriptures would **THOROUGHLY (COMPLETELY)** furnish unto **ALL** good works." In II Pet. 1:3, he had this to say, "According to his **DIVINE POWER** HATH given unto us, **ALL THINGS** that pertain unto life and godliness."

Beloved, there is **NO PLACE** in the New

Covenant where the apostles ever BOUND the Old Law or any part of it on God's people today! Neither do we find in the New Covenant where the apostles ever BOUND, or COMMANDED Christians to "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy!"

There are preachers today who claim to have the gift of "Prophecy" teaching that men have changed the day of worship from the Sabbath to Sunday. Therefore, those who rest or worship on the first day of the week (the Lord's day) have the mark of the beast! There is no greater falsehood taught than this.

Man did NOT CHANGE the day of rest or worship — Christ did. Christ arose on the first day of the week and appeared to His apostles several times on the first day. The Christian age, and Christ's church had their beginning on the FIRST DAY of the week (Lord's day, see Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:1, 2). This was 300 years before Constantine's day, who some claim changed the day of worship.

Friends, the Bible was given and written by inspired men. Therefore, what they taught was the TRUTH and no man dare change it, or preach any other gospel. If they do they are under the anathema of God (Gal. 1:8, 9). Paul says in Rom. 3:4, "Let God be True, but every man a liar." In I John 4:1, "Beloved, believe not every spirit (teaching) but TRY the spirits whether they be of God: WHY? Because many FALSE prophets (preachers) are gone out into the world."

WHY BE BAPTIZED?

In the last few weeks I have received letters criticizing what I had to say about "water baptism." All I did was quote what Christ and His apostles had to say about it. So, if I was wrong so was Christ and the apostles! Does the Bible actually teach that baptism has a part in man's salvation? Is it part of the gospel? Yes, it certainly does play an important part in our salvation. Please study with me the scriptures that are recorded in the Word of God.

In Matt. 28:18-20, Jesus said that "ALL AUTHORITY or POWER is given unto me in heaven and in earth." "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: (What to do with them after they have been taught?) Teach them to OBSERVE ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I have commanded you." Jesus Christ having RECEIVED all POWER or AUTHORITY, certainly has the right to give the conditions of salvation, and it is man's duty to OBEY His every COMMAND.

Again in Mark 16:15, 16, this is Mark's record of the great commission that Christ gave to His chosen apostles. Notice what Christ said, "Go ye into all the world (and do what?) preach the gospel (to just a chosen few) to EVERY creature." What is the responsibility of those who hear? "He that believeth (believes what? the gospel which is God's

power to save, Rom. 1:16) and is baptized (why be baptized?) shall be saved.” Notice Jesus did not say, He that believeth shall be saved, and then be baptized if they desired to do so. But, He that believeth and is baptized (not to those who just believe) shall be saved. Why not just believe what the Bible says about it? REMEMBER Christ spoke by authority, and the apostles were INSPIRED to write it.

On the day of Pentecost Peter and the other apostles were in the city of Jerusalem waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit, “Which would guide them into ALL THE TRUTH” (John 16:13). In Acts 2:4 it said, “And they (the apostles) were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” We have Peter’s sermon recorded which begins at verse 14-36. Remember that Peter was inspired (or spoke as the Spirit gave him utterance) as he spoke to those that murdered the Lord Jesus Christ. When they heard this they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, WHAT SHALL WE DO?” NOTICE carefully what Peter told them to do. Remember that Peter said the Spirit was guiding him in saying it. He said, “Repent and be baptized (by whose authority Peter) everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ (what for Peter?) for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Now, I ask, do you believe that Christ and his chosen apostles told the TRUTH? I know that there are some “modern

day” preachers that deny that baptism plays any part in man’s salvation. Don’t believe it! Paul said in Rom. 3:4, “Let God be true, and every man a liar.” Amen.

IS BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR TODAY?

(Lesson One)

Of all Bible themes, none are more worthy of prayerful investigation than that which involves the person, power, and mission of God's Holy Spirit. Superstitious fear has seriously handicapped unbiased study of the Spirit's operations. Crafty perversions have developed many conflicting opinions, and numerous contradictory theories with respect to the Spirit's operations. Because of FALSE NOTIONS, unfounded prejudices, and grass misunderstandings, those who are uninformed have made extravagant assertions which CANNOT BE PROVED.

However, deceptions are readily discovered if people will carefully and honestly study the scriptures to LEARN the TRUTH, and not try to prove their theories to satisfy their emotions.

The beloved apostle John said, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but TRY the spirits (teaching) whether they be of God; WHY? For MANY FALSE prophets (teachers) are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1). Those who claim to have the Holy Spirit Paul says, "For such are false apostles (teachers) deceitful workers transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be

according to their works” (II Cor. 11:13-15). Paul says in the third and fourth verses of this same chapter, “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the SIMPLICITY that is in Christ.” Paul says, that some would come preaching ANOTHER JESUS — some would receive another SPIRIT — or receive another GOSPEL. I ask, are there any FALSE teachers in the world today? If so, how can these so-called spirit-filled people tell what spirit they have received? Are they able to PROVE their assertions by opening the blinded eyes, heal all manner of diseases, raise the dead to life again? (By the way, there were some of these so-called spirit-filled teachers who went down to a funeral home in San Diego and TRIED to raise a dead man, of course they FAILED as they always do). But if they were baptized with the Holy Spirit as the apostles were, they would be ABLE to raise the dead, drink deadly poison, open the blinded eyes.

The apostles of Christ and those that received a spiritual gift, confirmed their message by signs and wonders, and divers miracles.

These tokens of divine presence were OPENLY shown that the revelation of TRUTH might be fully established. Paul points out in II Tim. 3:16, 17, that all truth has been thoroughly and completely revealed unto man — all things that pertain to life and godliness has been made known to man. Therefore, those who

claim to have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and are receiving new revelation (guided into new truths) are teaching false doctrine.

Beloved, the Bible contains all the TRUTH that man needs to prepare him for that eternal home. Believe it and OBEY it friends, and God will bless you abundantly above all that you think and do.

IS BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR TODAY?

(Lesson Two)

In the preceding article on the baptism of the Holy Spirit I pointed out that there would be FALSE teachers who would claim to have received the Holy Spirit in the same measure as the apostles of Christ.

Man is therefore subjected to such varied, complex and contradictory spiritual emotions that left to himself he will grope his way blindly, live his day uncertainly, and die at last without assurance. Therefore, all spiritual impulses, (emotions) supernatural phenomena, and superhuman powers must be FULLY analyzed, critically EXAMINED, and thoroughly TESTED before they are accepted and believed. This analyzing, examining, and testing, should be made ONLY by the revelation of an infallible AUTHORITY with respect to the Spirit's manifestations. The Bible, God's Divine Word is just such revelation, and Jesus Christ is just such authority. Any claims to spiritual knowledge, guidance and power that are contrary to the authority of Christ and to the facts and doctrine of His revelation HAVE NOT GOD AS THEIR SOURCE (I John 4:1; I Thess. 5:21).

In the early days of nineteen hundred there were such people as: Joseph Smith, Ellen G. White, Mary Baker Eddy, Charles T. Russell, and a hundred more of those who claimed that they were being

guided by the Holy Spirit (yet they all taught conflicting doctrines). NOW, if the Holy Spirit were guiding these people as they claim, the Holy Spirit would be guilty of causing DIVISION and fostering FALSE DOCTRINES! Do you believe it, I don't! Paul told us that "For God is not the author of CONFUSION, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints" (I Cor. 14:33).

Those who claim to be baptized with the Holy Spirit are causing division in the religious world today. They are denying the authority of the scriptures, the law of Christ, and Christ's glorious church which He purchased with His precious blood (Acts 20:28; I Pet. 1:18).

Christ and His chosen apostles who were guided by the Holy Spirit taught that division is wrong, sinful and said those who caused division were lost. In John 17:20, 21, Christ prayed that all people be ONE! and in I Cor. 1:10, Paul pleaded that "by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye ALL SPEAK THE SAME THING, and that there BE NO DIVISIONS AMONG YOU; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the SAME MIND and in the SAME JUDGMENT." Yet those who claim to have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit are causing division contrary to what the inspired writers taught. The Holy Spirit NEVER DID inspire anyone to teach conflicting doctrines in New Testament times, and He does not do so now. The people who are causing

division, and causing people to DO THINGS contrary to what Christ and His apostles taught, just don't have the baptism of the Holy Spirit!

I stand ready to DEFEND the TRUTH at any time, and show that those who claim to have received a miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit, have not received the Holy Spirit at all but have ANOTHER spirit that's not from God but from the devil.

IS MIRACULOUS HEALING FOR TODAY?

Paul, in II Thess. 2:4-10 says, "That the time would come when there would arise false teachers." Notice verse 4. "Who opposeth and exalteth himself (or themselves) above all that is called God: (verse 9) even whose coming is after the working of Satan, with ALL POWER and SIGNS and LYING WONDERS." In II Cor. 11:13-15, "For such are FALSE apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into APOSTLES of Christ, and no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light." Also, his ministers would be transformed into ministers of righteousness.

Beloved, the apostle Paul is warning us that time would come that Satan by his false apostles, preachers, and prophets would claim the same miraculous power that Christ's apostles had, therefore deceiving people into believing that they could heal them. There is no greater untruth than this. Those who claim to have the power are not telling the truth — for NO ONE HAS THE POWER today! They are the workers of Satan.

Christ, in giving the chosen apostles miraculous power, gave it for a special purpose and that purpose was to confirm their message as the truth. In Mark 16:14-20, (let us notice to whom Christ was speaking), verse 14, "After he appeared unto the eleven (apostles) as they sat at meat, and

upbraided them (the apostles) with their unbelief and hardness of heart because they believed not them which had seen Him after he was risen.” There is no doubt here as to whom Christ was speaking. And speaking again to the apostles, he said, “Go preach the gospel to every creature.” The 16th verse told them the message that they were to preach. Beginning with the 17th verse, Christ continues to speak to the apostles, “And these signs shall follow them (apostles) that believe.” Remember that Christ had upbraided the apostles because of their unbelief. Jesus is not speaking to all believers. Now let us continue verse 17 – “in my name (by Christ’s authority), shall they (apostles) cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues.” Friends, have you actually seen these so-called miraculous healers and tongue speakers “cast out evil spirits or the devil?” Have you seen any of them take up deadly serpents and drink any deadly poison? Have they healed the sick? When healing has failed, lack of the person’s faith is claimed. Notice verse 20, “and they (apostles) went forth and preached (the gospel) everywhere. And the Lord working with them (apostles) and **CONFIRMING the WORD with SIGNS following.**” See Heb. 2:3, 4. The Bible, the divine word – the gospel – has been confirmed – therefore, there is no need for miracles or signs.

WHAT CONSTITUTES THE NEW BIRTH?

Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus points out the necessity of the New Birth, which no sensible person would deny. Jesus said, "Except a MAN be born of water and the Spirit he CANNOT enter the kingdom of God." NOTICE! Jesus said, "Except a MAN," not a little child. For Jesus said in Matt. 18: 3; 19:14, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, you SHALL not enter the kingdom of God." In verse 4 Christ says that a little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Chapter 19:14 Jesus said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: (NOTICE) for of such is the kingdom of God." This settles the matter of little children. Because they are not lost. Therefore they don't need to be baptized.

When Jesus said to Nicodemus "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit," He was not talking about two births. Water in this verse does not mean the natural birth. It takes both water and the Spirit to produce the new birth! All "noted" Biblical scholars say that the water in this passage refers to water baptism. And this is in harmony with what Jesus Christ and His apostles taught about baptism. Notice what Jesus said in Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is BAPTIZED SHALL BE SAVED." Peter said to the people on Pentecost when they asked "WHAT SHALL WE DO?" "REPENT, AND BE BAPTIZED, everyone of you in the name of

Jesus Christ **FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS**, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Peter again says in I Pet. 3:21, “The like figure whereunto even **BAPTISM DOTH ALSO SAVE US.**” In Acts 22:16 Ananias said to Saul, “Why tarriest thou? Arise and be **BAPTIZED AND WASH AWAY THY SINS**, calling on the name of the Lord.” Therefore, everyone that rejects these plain and positive teachings of Christ and His apostles does not believe in Christ!

What constitutes the New Birth? (1) Faith in God and His Son (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24). (2) Repentance (Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38; 17:30, 31). (3) Confession (Matt. 10:32, 33; Rom. 10:9, 10). (4) Baptism (Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38, 41).

Beloved, faith **ALONE** will not save; for one can believe in God and His Son and not be saved! Notice (John 12:42, 43; Jas. 2:17, 24). Any preacher that teaches “salvation is by faith **“ONLY”** denies what the Bible teaches. For there is **NO SUCH** statement found in God’s Word! If so where is it? Friends, the Bible does teach that one is **NOT** saved by faith **ONLY** (Jas. 2:17, 24). “Even so faith, if it hath works, is dead, being **ALONE.**” Verse 24 says, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by **FAITH ONLY.**” If one can be saved by “**FAITH ONLY**” then one can be saved without love, the blood, repentance, and obedience to the gospel. Do you believe it? I don’t for my Bible

teaches me that ALL THESE THINGS are essential to one's salvation. Man MUST OBEY Christ's Will to be saved. "For he is the author of eternal salvation unto ALL THEM THAT OBEY HIM." Also read Matt. 7:21, 28. Friends, why not be honest with God and with yourself, and OBEY WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ON FAITH?

“By grace are you saved through faith” (Eph. 2:8). “Without faith it is impossible to please him (God)” (Heb. 11:6). “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). From these few scriptures it is evident that all who will be saved, will be saved by faith. With no more of an examination of the Bible one may conclude that one is saved by FAITH ONLY. An investigation in the Bible clearly reveals that the idea of “faith only” is the situation in which the devils stand (Jas. 2:19). “Faith only” or as the Bible puts it, “Faith if it hath not works is dead” (Jas. 2:17). James even got so strong against the “faith only” doctrine that he said, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (Jas. 2:24).

“FAITH ONLY” is not good enough to please God. Paul spoke of the kind of faith we should have when he said, “Faith which worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6). Take a look at some other Bible statements that show that we must obey commands of the gospel to be saved: “Not everyone that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that DOETH the WILL of my Father” (Matt. 7:21-23). “In every nation he that feareth him (God), and WORKETH righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35). “Ye are my friend, IF YE DO whatsoever I command you” (John 14:15). “Seeing ye have purified your souls IN OBEYING THE TRUTH”

(I Pet. 1:22). “He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that OBEY HIM” (Heb. 5:9).

Friends, from these Bible verses we MUST conclude that faith is necessary for one to be saved. Also we MUST conclude that an effective saving faith is one that love produces the works of obedience to Christ. Paul says “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that KNOW not God, and that OBEY not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (II Thess. 1: 7, 9). Don’t you want to be with those that believe and teach just what the Bible teaches?

“YOU SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH”

Christianity is built upon TRUTH and without TRUTH man cannot be saved. But how does truth save? Man must not only know the TRUTH, but he must OBEY TRUTH. Peter stated in his first epistle “Seeing you have PURIFIED your souls in OBEYING THE TRUTH” (I Pet. 1:22). But what is truth? It’s not what some think about it, or what man says about it. Jesus in His prayer to His Father says, “Sanctify them through thy TRUTH: thy word is TRUTH” (John 17:17). Therefore, if the truth makes one free, and by it one is sanctified, then man has no alternative but to learn and obey it to obtain salvation. But how much truth should one know? The whole TRUTH, and nothing but the TRUTH.

In the gospel of John 16:13, Jesus said to His apostles, “how be it when he, the Spirit of TRUTH is come, he will guide you into all TRUTH.” In II Pet. 1:3, Peter says, “According as His divine power hath given unto us ALL THINGS THAT PERTAIN unto life and godliness through the knowledge of him that hath called us unto glory and virtue.” If God has given and guided the apostles into ALL THE TRUTH as these scriptures state, then it behooves man to find out what Christ and His apostles taught man to DO in order for him to be saved!

First let us notice what Christ said to His apostles after He was raised from the dead. In John 8:24,

He said, "For if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." Read John 3:16, 36; Mark 16:16; Heb. 11:6. From these scriptures we learn that FAITH or belief is part of TRUTH. Again in Luke 13:3, Jesus says, "Except ye REPENT, ye shall all likewise perish." Also read Acts 2:38; 17:30, 31. We learn that repentance is also part of TRUTH. In Matt. 10:32, 33, Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." Read Rom. 10:9, 10. Confession then is part of TRUTH. In Mark 16:16 Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Also read, Acts 2:38; 22:16; I Pet. 3:21. These scriptures teach that baptism is part of TRUTH. Now what have we learned? We have learned that man MUST know the truth to be made FREE, and that man is sanctified by the TRUTH, and that the Word of God is TRUTH, and that the Spirit of God GUIDED the apostles into ALL TRUTH. The apostles therefore, taught that man MUST have faith in God — MUST repent of his sins — MUST confess Christ before men — MUST be baptized for the remission of sins.

I dare anyone to deny that FAITH, REPENTANCE, CONFESSION, and BAPTISM are not TRUTH! Therefore if anyone desires to be saved and spend eternity with God in heaven, they MUST recognize that in order to be saved, sanctified, made free from their sins, they have no ALTERNATIVE but to believe and obey these commandments, or be LOST in hell! PLEASE read these scriptures, Gal. 1:6-8; II Thess. 1:8-9; 2:10-12. REMEMBER TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE.

TRUE RELIGION vs. FALSE RELIGION

The New Testament not only describes true religion, but contrasts it with false religion. For example:

In true religion, Christ is the **ONLY HEAD** of the church with **ALL AUTHORITY** in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:22). In false religion, a man or a group of men are the head of the churches. See the remarkable description of false religion in II Thess. 2:1-12 of a “man — sitting in the temple of God — exalting himself, setting himself forth as God.”

The true religion of Christ is the oldest, starting with Christ and the apostles. False religion is almost as old, starting even during the lifetime of Paul (II Thess. 2:8).

True religion has few followers as we read in Matt. 7:13, 14; II Pet. 2:1, 2. This is true because most people don't want to be obedient to the doctrine of Christ. They want to do as they please. False religion has many followers. For Jesus said, “For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat” (Matt. 7:13).

True religion esteems the Bible as an authoritative book, that it is complete and is a perfect guide in all religion matters (II Tim. 3:16, 17; II Pet. 1:3).

False religion considers the Bible incomplete and adds to it the opinions and traditions of men (Matt. 15:9; Mark 7:7-9). Which Paul says will perish with the using (Col. 3:22).

True religion teaches that the kingdom of Christ has been established and is in the world today (Col. 1:13). Will you please tell me how people could be translated into the kingdom, if it is still in the future? Also how people could be BORN into the kingdom if it has not been SET UP? (John 3:5).

False religion teaches that the kingdom of Christ will not be established until Christ returns, and He then will set up His kingdom and reign a thousand years which the scriptures does not substantiate.

True religion teaches that Christ built BUT ONE church, which is His body, and all that are not members of His church will be LOST (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 5:23). For God adds ONLY those that OBEY His will to the church (Acts 2:47).

False religion teaches that people can belong to the church of their choice. And that they can be saved without doing the Will of God. The salvation is by faith ONLY which contradicts the Word of God (Jas. 2:17, 24).

True religion has no titles of distinction for men. False religion abounds in titles of distinction

(Matt. 23:8, 9). “Call no man father.”

True religion honors Christ by wearing His name (I Pet. 4:16). False religion wears other names.

Beloved, take time to investigate the scriptures and see whether your religion is True or False. It's too dangerous to take a chance.

THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT THE CHURCH AND KINGDOM ARE ONE!

The subject of the church and kingdom is of great importance for man's eternal destiny depends upon one being a member of Christ's church or a citizen of His kingdom.

The prophet Samuel said in II Sam. 7:13, 16, "He shall **BUILD AN HOUSE** for my name, and I will establish the throne of his **KINGDOM**." In verse 16 he said, "And thine **HOUSE** and thy **KINGDOM** shall be established forever before thee." Again in Isa. 2: 2, 3 this prophet said, "That the **HOUSE** of the Lord shall be established . . . All nations shall flow into it . . . And He shall teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths: For out of Zion (the church or God's house) shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." But to understand these prophecies, we must ask what is the **HOUSE** of the Lord? We need not guess, for Paul tells us in his letter to Timothy. He said, "That the **HOUSE** of the Lord is the **CHURCH** of the living God (I Tim. 3:15). This establishes the fact that the church and kingdom are one and the same institution.

To establish this truth beyond any doubt let us turn to the New Testament where Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church" (or house) — and then in verse 19 He says, "I will give unto thee (the apostles) the keys of the **KINGDOM** of heaven"

(Matt. 16:18, 19). Beloved, if the church and the kingdom are not the same then Jesus did a stupid thing in giving to the apostles the keys of the kingdom instead of the church!

Again we have this same lesson in Col. 1:13, 18. In verse 13 Paul says, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the KINGDOM of His Son:" In verse 18 Paul says, "And He is the head of the body, the CHURCH." Why would Paul teach that the Colossians were translated into the kingdom, and then say that Christ is the head of the church IF the church and kingdom are not one and the same institution?

The church of Jesus Christ was not an accident, nor an "afterthought" on God's part, as a result of the Jews rejecting Christ as King. The church has an important place in the scheme of man's redemption. And the establishment of the church was "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. And according to His eternal purpose" (Eph. 3:9, 10; Acts 2:23).

Therefore, those who teach that the kingdom of God is to be established in the future are not teaching the truth about it.

What an honor to be a citizen of Christ's kingdom — to eat and drink at His table in His kingdom, and at the same time be in that grand, Divine, and

glorious institution the CHURCH of which Christ is its head. Beloved, if you are not in the kingdom of heaven, then you are not a member of Christ's church. To be born into the kingdom is the same as obeying God's will and being added to the church (Matt. 7:21; Acts 2:47).

ARE ALL RELIGIOUS PEOPLE CHRISTIANS?

There are serious difficulties involved in discussing a quest of this nature, because of the attitude most people already have toward it: for many a question like this one is to them a reflection on their honesty and integrity with reference to their religion. But let it be emphasized at the very outset that this is not the purpose of this investigation to call in question anyone's honesty or sincerity. Our aim, instead is to determine in the light of God's Word whether or not there is a difference between being religious and being a Christian; and whether or not one can be honestly mistaken in religious matters.

It is a well known fact that a person **MUST** be religious in order to be a Christian; but the question before us is, can one be religious and not be a Christian? If one cannot, then all religious people, regardless of the character of their religion, are Christian; but if one can be religious and not be a Christian, then some people are certainly mistaken in thinking that they are Christians, just because they are religious.

It is a fact that people can be religious and not be a Christian. This fact ought to cause every person to make a close examination of their status in religion. Paul says, "To **PROVE ALL THINGS**, and hold fast to that which is good" (I Thess. 5:21; I Pet. 3:15). Again in II Cor. 13:5, Paul says, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; **PROVE** your

ownelves, Know ye not your ownelves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates.”

Everything in Christianity MUST be AUTHORIZED by the Scriptures, and nothing taken for granted. Solomon the wise man said, “There is a WAY that seemeth right, but the END thereof is the way of death” (Prov. 14:12).

It is very necessary that one know the meaning of the words “Religion” and “Christianity.” Religion is a system of faith and worship which may or may not be of Divine origin (Jas. 1:26, 27). Christianity indeed is a religion; but it differs from all other religions in that Christ is its author. There are many religions, but ONLY ONE that can rightfully be called Christianity (Rom. 10:1-4). There were the Jews, the people of Athens (Acts 17). Saul of Tarsus, Cornelius, and Lydia. These were all religious people but were not Christians, until they obeyed the gospel of Christ (Rom. 6:17).

Surely no one can fail to see from these examples that it is possible for a man to be religious and not be a Christian. And if that were true in Bible times, it is true now; and therein lies the necessity of making SURE that we are right before accepting any religion (II John 9).

The New Testament authorizes Christianity and Christianity alone; and if one will believe and obey that which is taught in God’s Divine Word he will be a Christian and NOTHING MORE.

PENTECOST: THE CHURCH'S CREATION DAY

About a year before His death Christ said: "Upon this rock I will build my church." How many churches did Christ build? **ONLY ONE**. That was His. What church was that? "The Church, which is His **BODY**" (Col. 1:18, 24). Then the **CHURCH** of Christ and the **Body of Christ** are the **SAME THING**. Since the Church is the Body of Christ, He is the **HEAD** of that Body, and every member of Christ is a member of His Body, the Church (Eph. 5:30; I Cor. 12:12, 20, 27; Rom. 12:5). Christ has no **MEMBERS** except the members of His Body, the Church — the very Church He said He would **BUILD** on the "rock" or **CONFESSION OF FAITH** in Him as the Son of God.

When and where was the Church built? To ascertain when and where Christ built His Church we need to learn when Christ was **MADE HEAD** of the Church, for Head and Body must of necessity be created at the same time. Paul tells us exactly when Christ was made Head; thus:

"According to that working strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in heavenly places, for above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and **GAVE HIM TO BE HEAD**

over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:19-23).

"And he is before all things, and in him all things consist. And he is **THE HEAD** of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the **PRE-EMINENCE**" (Col. 1:17, 18).

These passages show (1) That Christ, to be Head of the Church, had to have "preeminence" over all things, both in heaven and on earth: (2) That this preeminence had to be "**MADE**" or accorded Him on account of His triumph over death; (3) That such a place of honor could be bestowed only upon a throne at God's "right hand" in the heavens (not on earth at all); and (4) That this could not have been done until God **RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD**; "to therefore, never become Head of the Church until he ascended to "sit" on His right hand as **EXALTED RULER** "over all things." Christ, therefore, never becomes Head of the Church until He ascended to heaven and was coronated as King of Kings at God's right hand. Consequently, the Church, the Body of Christ, was not built until Christ was thus coronated King of Kings at God's right hand in the heavens — after his ascension.

Christ having been crowned King of Kings, and given to be head of the Church, which is His Body. The King of His Kingdom therefore as such He has the authority to "command" man to obey the law of His kingdom, and as Head of His Body, He has the authority to direct the activity of His Body!

THE ESSENTIALITY OF THE CHURCH

The church of Jesus Christ is the greatest and most glorious institution in the world. It is “the body” — “the family” of God — “the kingdom of Christ” (they are one and the same), and the only people that are saved, are those that are in Christ’s body, the church. For within the body the church are located “FORGIVENESS,” “redemption,” “adoption,” and “sanctification” (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; II Tim. 2:10). Not one of these is found OUT of the church, for, as we have seen, that would place them in the world. But men MUST leave the world — be separated from it to be saved. For salvation is found ONLY IN CHRIST! (II Tim. 2:10).

The church is the “body of Christ” (Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18, 24), and men can enter Him ONLY by entering His body, “which is the church.” To be “in Christ,” then is to be IN HIS BODY, THE CHURCH. Now Paul says, speaking of Christ: “In whom we have our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses” (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). “In whom” — notice that! — we have redemption or forgiveness of sins: we have this in Christ — in “the church, which is His body,” and it is reached by us “through His blood.” Hence within “the church, which is His body,” and it is reached by us “through His blood.” Hence within THE CHURCH we obtain “redemption,” the forgiveness of sins. But “adoption” and “sanctification” are likewise IN Christ — in

“the church, which is His body.” In fact ALL spiritual blessings are IN Him: “Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). There is not, then, any spiritual blessings to be enjoyed OUT of Christ — out of the church. But speaking of the NEW CREATURE made by adoption, Paul says, “Wherefore if any man is IN Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new” (II Cor. 5:17). Men enter the NEW state when they enter the body or church of Christ. This new state is that where sanctification is reached: “As Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for IT; that He might sanctify IT, having cleansed IT by the washing of water with the word, that He might present IT to Himself a glorious CHURCH, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that IT should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:25-28). That locates sanctification and every spiritual attainment wrought through the power of Christ IN THE CHURCH. It also shows redemption and every spiritual accomplishment to be located — hence enjoyed — solely in the BODY of Christ, THE CHURCH. This fact, therefore, shows the church to be the MOST important institution, membership in which being equivalent to redemption or salvation. The church is precisely the same value to men as is their redemption or salvation. God has no children outside of His family, THE CHURCH. All that heard and obeyed the gospel were added to the church, or family of God (Acts 2:47).

CHRISTIANITY IS SOMETHING YOU DO, NOT SOMETHING YOU GET

Christianity was established upon FACTS that cannot be denied. But there is more confusion in religion than any other thing that I know about. And it's all because people are ignorant as to what true religion is. As long as people think the religion of Christ is something that people GET there will still be confusion because they all don't get it in the same way. But friends, the idea of getting religion is FALSE — as far from the truth as light is from darkness.

Now! Let us see what the Bible the Divine Word of God has to say about it. In Matt. 7:21, Jesus says, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that DOETH THE WILL of my Father which is in heaven." Now the 24-27 verses say, "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and DOETH them, I will liken unto a WISE MAN — And every one that heareth the sayings of mine, and DOETH THEM NOT, shall be liken unto a FOOLISH MAN." It is very easy to determine WHO the WISE are: those that DO the WILL of God: those who claim to GET religion are foolish and are building upon the sand. But again Jesus says in Luke 6:46, "And WHY call ye me, Lord, Lord, and DO NOT THE THINGS I SAY? There's a lot of people around today saying, "Jesus, Jesus, or Lord, Lord," and at the same time deny that there is anything in Christianity for them to do! But

listen to Jesus again in Matt. 7:22, 23, "Many will say to me in that day (the judgment day), Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied (taught) in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." May I ask why the Lord would say to these people depart from me? This pictures those today that are going around teaching "for Jesus to come into the hearts of people. If you will only believe that Jesus is God's Son, and receive him as your personal savior he will save you!" These same people today, claim to speak in tongues, perform miracles, heal the sick, just as the people at the judgment had done. But why did Jesus say depart from me? It was because they had NOT DONE THE LORD'S WILL.

In John's gospel Jesus said, "If you LOVE me, KEEP (DO) my commandments — He that hath my commandments, and KEEPETH (DOETH) them, he it is that loveth me — If a man love me, He will keep (DO) my words" (John 14:15, 21, 23). It matters not how much people say Jesus, Jesus, or Lord, Lord, and just believe that Jesus is God's Son, IT WILL NOT SAVE them, for all MUST OBEY GOD'S WILL to be saved. Paul said, "that the people at Rome had OBEYED from the heart that form of doctrine — being then made free from sin" (Rom. 6:17, 18).

The Hebrew writer says that "Jesus is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that OBEY

HIM” (Heb. 5:9). Therefore, the ONLY ONE’S that will be permitted to enter the portals of Glory and enjoy eternal bliss, are these “That DO HIS commandments (Rev. 22:14). Be not deceived friends. Remember Christianity is something you DO and not GET!

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ON, "WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?"

This question was asked three times in the book of Acts. Salvation from sin is the most wonderful thing in the world. All mankind should have a desire to be saved. Christ came to save those that were lost. But will all men be saved? NO! Only those that will OBEY the WILL of Christ! For Christ is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that OBEY HIM (Heb. 5:8, 9).

When this question is asked, Notice! They did not ask how will I feel, or think, BUT WHAT MUST I DO? When the people on Pentecost asked, "What shall we do?" Peter said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name (by the authority) of Jesus Christ (What for?) for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38, 39). When this question was asked, Notice! Peter did not tell them just believe that Jesus was God's Son; or, I accept Jesus as my personal Savior; or to pray through, but to "Repent and be baptized."

Saul was on his way to Damascus and the Lord appeared unto him. "And Saul fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Then verse six says, "and he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what will thou HAVE ME TO DO?" Jesus told Saul to go to

Damascus, "And it shall be told thee what thou **MUST DO.**" Saul went to Damascus as the Lord commanded him to do. Christ appeared to Ananias the preacher at Damascus and when he arrived he found Saul of Tarsus praying. Ananias laid his hands on him that he might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. In Acts 22:16, Ananias said to Saul, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Christ did not appear to Saul of Tarsus to save him but to make him an apostle (Acts 9:15; 26:16).

The third time this question is found is in Acts 16:30. Here Paul and Silas had been put in prison. While in they prayed, and sang praises unto God: Suddenly there was an earthquake and all doors of the prison were opened, and every one's bands were loosen. The jailer saw that the doors were opened and the prisoners were loosed so he drew his sword and started to kill himself. But Paul cried out. "Do thyself no harm we are all here." The jailer said "Sirs, What Must I Do?" The jailer was a Gentile therefore he did know Christ, so Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." This scripture does not teach that the jailer was saved by faith only as some teach, for in verse 32 it says, "And they **SPAKE** unto him the Word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." To speak or preach the Word of God means that they preached the **SAME GOSPEL** that Peter

preached on Pentecost. For God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34, 35). “And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes: and was baptized, he and all his straightway” (Acts 16:33). Friends, don’t be deceived by false teachers, but OBEY Christ’s command. “He that believeth and is baptized SHALL BE SAVED” (Mark 16:16).

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT FELLOWSHIP?

In the book of Acts 2:41, 42 Luke says, "Those that received the word were baptized," and those that were baptized were to continue in the apostles DOCTRINE and FELLOWSHIP, and "in breaking of bread and prayers." Fellowship with whom? With those that were baptized and those that CONTINUED in the apostles DOCTRINE. Therefore, those that do not continue in Christ's doctrine (apostles doctrine) ARE NOT TO BE FELLOWSHIPED IN CHRISTIANITY.

The Jews were forbidden to have fellowship with the Gentiles before Christ came. But after Christ died on the cross, Paul says, in Eph. 3:6-9, "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the SAME BODY, and partakers of His promise IN CHRIST by the gospel."

This "Christian fellowship" movement today does not follow the advice of the apostle Paul as given in Eph. 5:11, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (false religious teachers) but rather reprove them." Again Paul says in II Cor. 6:14-17, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what FELLOWSHIP hath righteousness with unrighteousness?" Verse 17 says, "Wherefore COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM, and be ye SEPARATE, saith the Lord, and touch not the

UNCLEAN THING; and I will RECEIVE YOU.”

Fellowship with God and His Son depends upon one “Abiding in the DOCTRINE of Christ.” How sweet and precious is that FELLOWSHIP. Listen to John, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have FELLOWSHIP with us: and truly our FELLOWSHIP is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (I John 1:3). Again, Paul says, “God is faithful, by whom you were called unto the FELLOWSHIP of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord” (I Cor. 1:9). Again the apostle John said, “If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have FELLOWSHIP one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (I John 1:7).

Christian fellowship is based upon Christ’s teaching not on what one feels or thinks. One MUST ABIDE in the DOCTRINE of Christ in order to have fellowship with God. How sad it will be for those that will NOT FOLLOW the Word of God! (Heb. 10:26-31).

WHAT SHALL WE DO?

This is one of the greatest questions asked by man, for it pertains to his eternal destiny. It was asked three times in the Acts of the Apostles. First in Acts 2:36. Peter had just preached the first gospel sermon under the guidance of the Holy Spirit on the first Pentecost after Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. He told them that they had killed — crucified the Lord of Glory, but God had raised Him up to sit at His own right hand (Acts 2:32). Verse 37 says, “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, **WHAT SHALL WE DO?**” Why did they ask this question if there isn’t anything for people to **DO TO BE SAVED**? Please **NOTICE** what Peter’s answer was, “Repent and be **BAPTIZED EVERY ONE OF YOU** in the name (by the authority) of Jesus Christ (What for Peter?) for the **REMISSION OF SINS**, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (verse 38).

In Acts the ninth chapter, we find Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus with letters of authority to bind and put in prison those who were following Christ. But the Lord appeared unto him. “And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice (Christ’s) saying unto me Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” “And he trembling and astonished said, **WHAT WILT THOU HAVE ME TO DO?** And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told

thee **WHAT THOU MUST DO**" (Acts 9:4-6).

Third, in Acts 16:25-30, Paul and Silas were in prison for preaching Christ. There was an earthquake, the prison doors were opened, and the jailer thought that the prisoners had escaped so he started to kill himself. But Paul crying with a loud voice, said, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and said, "Sirs, **WHAT MUST I DO?** And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house." Now, if we would stop here, one might get the idea that one can be saved by faith alone. But Paul and Silas did not stop. The next verse tells us that they (Paul and Silas) spake unto him the **WORD OF THE LORD**, and to all that were in the house. To speak the Word of the Lord is to preach the gospel of Christ, which is His **POWER TO SAVE** (Rom. 1:16). "And they took them the **SAME** hour of the night, and washed their stripes (which shows they repented); and was baptized, he and all his straightway" (Acts 8:32, 33).

These three examples of conversion are in harmony with what Jesus Christ commanded His apostles to preach under the Great Commission.

In Mark 16:15, 16, Jesus said, "Go preach the gospel to every creature – He that believeth and is baptized **SHALL BE SAVED**." Again on Pentecost Peter speaking by the Spirit said, "Repent and be

baptized — for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38).

Friends, these things are too **PLAIN** for anyone to misunderstand them, so who dare say they are **NOT SO!**

HOW TO ENTER CHRIST'S CHURCH

Christ's church was built on the first Pentecost after his resurrection from the dead. On this notable day the first gospel sermon was preached, and three thousand precious souls were **ADDED** to Christ's church. Acts 2:22-57 shows exactly **HOW** these people became members of the **ONLY CHURCH** Christ has on the earth. All members from then till now have been added in the same manner. Those people simply heard the gospel, believed it, repented of their sins, and were baptized in the name of Christ "unto the remission" of their sins. They were thus "baptized **INTO** Christ" — into the church which is His body (Rom. 6:3, 4; Gal. 3:27; Col. 1:24). All who did these things were by the Lord "added to" the church. They had nothing to "join." They had to "be born again" — "born of water and the Spirit" in order to be saved (John 3:3, 5), and by this birth they were added to — were born into — the church or **FAMILY** of God; just as you, by fleshly birth, were added to — born into — your earthly father's family.

To have membership in Christ's church, therefore, one needs **ONLY** to become a child of God, which, of course, puts one into the family or house of God, "**WHICH IS THE CHURCH**" (I Tim. 3:15). Any "church membership" not fully obtained in this manner — viz., by simply becoming a child of God, a Christian, — is membership in Babylon. But neither

the Catholic church, nor any Protestant denomination, can possibly be entered by simple act of becoming a child of God. They must all be "joined" by some subsequent act appointed by the respective "church" in which membership is sought. Therefore, they form **NO PART** of the **FAMILY OF GOD**. "Wherefore, come ye out from among them" (II Cor. 6:17).

The Scriptures, says Paul, are "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (II Tim. 3:16, 17). But while the Scriptures "**COMPLETELY FURNISH**" the man of God unto "**EVERY GOOD WORK**," they do not "furnish" him with the information about **HOW** to become a member of **ANY RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION**. But they "furnish" him with ample instructions as to **HOW** to become a **CHRISTIAN OR CHILD OF GOD**, and a member of the **CHURCH OF CHRIST**, but they are as silent as the tomb about how to become a member of any denomination. Had God wanted His people to enter any of these institutions He would have said so and shown them how to do it. As it is, one may do everything God has commanded — "every good work" — and never become a member of any denomination. He may read and understand every word in the Bible, and from **THAT BOOK** he will never learn of such a thing as a denomination. He must go outside of the Bible to learn anything about a denomination; in that Book he

reads of Christ's church alone. Which He "purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28) and which is the House or Family of God (I Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:6). Friends, why belong to something the Bible says NOTHING ABOUT?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT UNDERSTANDING TRUTH?

All over the world today religious people are confused about what the Bible teaches. Religious teachers are saying that man cannot understand it because the Bible is irrelevant for today and there is no need to be disturbed about it. How false this is. Paul says, "Be not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). And Paul told us to "study to show thyself approved unto God" (II Tim. 2:15). Christ and Paul taught that man **MUST** know the **TRUTH**, and the **WILL** of God! Yet, modernists and liberalists are saying that knowing the **TRUTH** and the **WILL** of God is not essential for salvation. Paul said, "Let God be true and every man a liar."

Some are asking, "How can I know what is right?" If you tell them what the Bible teaches, they say, "That is your opinion or your interpretation." As an example, in Mark 16:15, 16, Jesus said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Now I ask, is that my interpretation or opinion? **NO!** That is exactly what Christ said. If I would say that Christ did not mean that one had to be baptized to be saved, then that would be my opinion or interpretation, would it not?

The apostle Peter says, "Knowing this first,

that no prophecy of the scripture is of any PRIVATE interpretation” (II Pet. 1:20). This teaches that NO MAN has a right to interpretation of the scriptures! WHY? Because the scriptures are not from man; he did not write them. Therefore, man has no right to interpret them. Peter said, “That man MUST SPEAK as the oracles of God” (I Pet. 4:11). The one who says “that is your opinion or interpretation,” just does not believe what God says or just does not want to DO God’s will!

All the divisions in religion are NOT brought about by what the Bible says; but, what it does not say. People that claim that they have been baptized with the Holy Spirit (and most all denominations do) deny what the Holy Spirit guided the apostles to teach on what TO DO to be saved. There is no wonder people are crying, “I cannot understand the Word of God.” Friends, God says what he means and means what He says. When you read your Bible, believe it as it reads. Do not interpret it to suit you!

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT RELIGION?

There are over six hundred religions in the world today, all teaching different doctrines. The word "religion" is found three times in the Bible (KJV: Acts 13:43; Gal. 1:13, 14; Jas. 1:26, 27). Really there are but two religions, the PURE, and the IMPURE, the TRUE and FALSE. But I ask, is one religion as good as another? If so the impure or false would be as good as the pure or true! If one religion is as good as another, WHY did Christ take away one to establish another? (Heb. 8). Again why did Paul change from the Jewish religion to the religion of Jesus Christ? Beloved all religions are not right! For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace (I Cor. 14:33).

Christ established the Christian religion of which He is its author (Heb. 5:9). All other religions are but the product of men. There is a great difference in religion and Christianity! Christianity was established upon FACTS, which cannot be denied (I Cor. 15:1-4). Denominationalism and all isms are of men, therefore false (Matt. 15:9).

The Bible nowhere teaches that one GETS RELIGION! Religion is something that you DO. As Jesus says in Matt. 25:33-46, "If one is hungry feed him, if one is naked clothe him . . ." In Jas. 1:27 he says, "Pure religion and undefiled before

God and the Father is this, To VISIT the fatherless and widows in their afflictions, and keep himself UNSPOTTED from the world.”

Beloved, because one is religious does not mean that one is a Christian! To be a Christian one MUST accept the religion of Christ, and OBEY His WILL, (Luke 6:46). Christianity is a life to be LIVED not something you get or feel (Matt. 7:21-27).

WHEN DOES GOD SEND A STRONG DELUSION?

In my first article I pointed out how people can be deceived, by believing false teachings, and continuing in them. God would send them a Strong Delusion, that they should believe a LIE and be damned by so doing.

Today the world is filled with false teachers that are deceiving many by claiming to be led by the Holy Spirit. Satan is very cunning in his approach to deceive people. NOTICE! Paul's statement in II Cor. 11:3, "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent (Satan) beguiled Eve through his subtilty (cunning craftiness), so your minds should be CORRUPTED from the SIMPLICITY that is in Christ." God has always used the simple thing to lead man for God's Word is simple and is not hard to understand if people will believe and accept it as it is written. These false teachers are saying that you cannot accept the Bible for it does not contain all truth! Therefore, it is not an authoritative book, so just believe what you like and forget the rest. When people teach that God's Word is ABSOLUTE TRUTH — RELEVANT for today they scoff at you as though you were teaching a falsehood.

Let me prove to you that all can understand what is plainly taught in the Bible, God's divine word. In Matt. 16:18, 19, Jesus said "I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH." Whose church did He say He would

build? His church, not churches. I dare anyone say He built more than ONE! But these false teachers are saying that there are many churches. Who are you going to believe, Christ or these false teachers? Again Jesus said in Mark 16:16, "He that believeth, and is baptized **SHALL BE SAVED.**" Peter said in Acts 2:38, "Repent, and **BE BAPTIZED EVERY ONE OF YOU** in the name of Jesus Christ **FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS**, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." But these false teachers are denying that these commands are so. But again, I ask who are you going to believe — Christ or these false teachers? The Bible is right my friends.

In Acts 20:7 Luke spoke by inspiration and said "And upon the first day of the week (not Saturday or Thursday), when the disciples **CAME TOGETHER TO BREAK BREAD** (eat the Lord's Supper), Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued until midnight." In I Cor. 11:23-29 Paul said, "For I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you. That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread. . ." (or instituted the Lord's Supper). And then, in I Cor. 14:37, Paul said, "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the **THINGS I WRITE UNTO YOU** are the **COMMANDMENTS OF THE LORD.**" But in the face of these plain and positive statements that it is a command of God for Christians to meet on the first day of the week to worship

God, these false teachers are denying it and saying that it makes no difference what DAY people meet to eat the Lord's Supper! When these false ideas are drilled into the minds of the people for a period of time they begin to believe it, and then teach it, and practice it. In this way (by believing false teachers) God sends them a STRONG DELUSION that they might believe a lie, and be damned by so doing. Beloved, it is always SAFE TO DO THE LORD'S WILL (Luke 6:46).

THE ONLY DIVINE CHURCH

The church built or created on the day of Pentecost is the ONE and ONLY church of God or Christ on earth. To enter THAT CHURCH is to build upon the Divine Foundation and have communion with Christ the Head. Any church founded this side of the day of Pentecost is purely a human sect, having in its foundation NEITHER Christ, the apostles, nor the inspired prophecies of the Old Testament period. It possesses NOTHING OF WORTH to human souls. It is a VAIN religion (Matt. 15:9; Col. 2:20-23).

As when God made Adam a PERFECT man on the day that He created him; so Christ made a PERFECT CHURCH on the day of Pentecost. It LACKED NOTHING. Its Head was perfect. Its members were perfectly "set" in it. Its law (some say Christ has no law) was perfect. A perfect GOSPEL (God's power to save men - Rom. 1:16) was first preached on that day. The TERMS of remission of sins were perfectly presented on that day (Acts 2:36-41), and about three thousand perfect additions to the church were the results. Here, then, is the PERFECT CHURCH — the ONLY church Christ has on earth. As such it is the MODEL CHURCH, the church whose every characteristic MUST exist in all subsequent congregations of Christ's church.

All churches of Christ, therefore, MUST:

(1) Possess Christ alone as Builder and Head, (2) Contain the original twelve apostles as its charter members — the original body. (Any church to which the apostles did NOT belong is NOT God's; to be in fellowship with Christ and God, we must be in fellowship with the original apostles - I John 1:3; not modern "apostles" as "successors" of them, for Christ's apostles had no successors); (3) Preach the gospel alone as the only MEANS of reaching, adding or enlisting men; (4) Command all responsible men who enter it, to (a) believe on Christ, (b) repent of their sins, and (c) be baptized in Christ's name "unto the remission" of their sins (Acts 2:38); (5) Teach all who truly do these things to know that the Lord has added them to the ONLY CHURCH He has, which includes and consists of ALL CHRISTIANS from the apostles until now, and that, therefore, it is their duty to love and fellowship ALL who have OBEYED the same divine instructions with them.

People who today do precisely and only what the people did on the day of Pentecost, became members of that same church — are united to Christ and His apostles — to the CHURCH THAT CHRIST BUILT and not to some church built by man.

They belong to NOTHING except to the church Christ built on the day of Pentecost. It is those who will not do what the apostles commanded on Pentecost that do not belong to Christ. "For as many as gladly received His word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them (the apostles) about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41).

ALL RIGHT: LET US JUDGE ALL RELIGION BY THE BIBLE

The above suggestion is a good one. It is true that not every one in the religious world accepts the BIBLE as the sole authority, but nearly all religious people would contend that the BIBLE does not conflict with their tradition and doctrine. Let us make a list of what we practice in religion and then find the verse in the BIBLE that supports that practice. If there is no such scripture, then our religion has fallen — the BIBLE being the judge:

The BIBLE does not need to mention a religious act by name, but the act **MUST** be found recorded on the pages of the New Testament. All men will accept the names of such acts as “the mass,” “baptism,” “sacrament,” “confirmation,” “penance,” “holy orders,” “Lord’s Day,” “Lord’s Supper,” or any other names, **IF** the practice can be found in the BIBLE (I Pet. 4:11).

Try the above list. Does the BIBLE teach that all men should be baptized? (Mark 16:15, 16: Acts 2:38). Is the mass, “a sequence of prayers and ceremonies” in which the literal body and blood of Christ appears on the altar to be sacrificed again, taught in the BIBLE? (If so, where is the text?) Does the BIBLE teach that the bread and wine of the Lord’s table will become literal flesh and blood to those who eat at the table? (If so, where is the text?) Does the BIBLE teach that matrimony is a rite to be celebrated by the clergyman of only one denomination and all other marriages are merely adulterous unions? (Where

is the text?) Does the BIBLE teach that certain clergymen alone have the right to give "holy orders?" (Where is the text?) Does the BIBLE teach that Christ or the apostles committed the power of forgiveness of sins to any man living today? (If so, where is the text?) Does the BIBLE teach that Christ appointed any man as His representative on earth? (If so, where is the text?)

If the layman cannot understand the BIBLE and if it must be interpreted by the clergymen, then why even pretend to try to find any of the above verses?

Christ never did say that ALL HIS TEACHING would have to be filtered through some Church before any man can go to heaven. The BIBLE teaches that all must study for themselves (II Tim. 2:15; Acts 17:11). All people will stand before God at the judgment for themselves (individually) II Cor. 5:10; Rom. 2:6.

Yes, Christ does say that HIS teaching is to be found in the Book (the BIBLE). Jesus said: "The WORD that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (Jno. 12:48). "But these are WRITTEN that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ" (Jno. 20:31) The Bible was written to be circulated and read by all men. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). The BIBLE reveals the perfect law of liberty (Jas. 1:25). A curse is pronounced upon all who would trifle with the words of the BIBLE (Rev. 22:18, 19; Gal. 1:6-9). Friends, why not accept the Bible as it is written, believe it, obey it and live by it and all of God's blessings and promises will be yours to enjoy.

THE SABBATH OR LORD'S DAY, WHICH?

The Bible is plain as to when the Seventh Day Sabbath was given and to whom it was given. The Bible says in Exodus 20:1-17, "God came down upon Mount Sinai and gave the law to the Israelites." Also read Deut. 5:1-4; Neh. 9:13-14. NOTICE! what Nehemia said, "Thou camest down also upon Mount Sinai — and makest KNOWN unto them (the Israelites) thy holy sabbath, and commandest them precepts, statutes, and law, by the hand of Moses the servant." If God gave these commandments does He not have the authority to change them?

The scriptures given above are conclusive proof as to whom, and when the law was given. But let us notice what Paul said in Galatians, "Wherefore then serveth the law? It (the law) was ADDED because of transgressions, TILL the seed (Christ) should come to whom the promise was made: (Gen. 12:1-3), and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator" (Gal. 3:19). Verses 24 and 25 of this same chapter say that the Old Law was our schoolmaster to bring us (the Jews) to Christ. He says, "That after FAITH (Christ) is come, we are NO LONGER under a schoolmaster." Also in the fourth chapter Paul says, "that Abraham had two sons one by a handmaid, the other by a free woman — one was born after the flesh — the other by promise — one represents Mount Sinai (the Old Law). The other represents the New Covenant: Jerusalem which is free, which is the mother of

us all.” Paul says in verse 30, **NOTICE!** “To **CAST OUT THE BOND WOMAN** (the old law) for we are not her children. But we are children of the **FREE WOMAN** (the new law).” Read it friends and you cannot misunderstand it. These scriptures are too plain for those that are honest to misunderstand it if people **BELIEVE** just what the Bible teaches about it.

The above scriptures are positive proof that the Old Covenant or Law was **NAILED** to the cross of Christ. Christians are not obligated to **KEEP** any part of the Old Law today.

Sabbatarians attempt to excite people today by creating prejudice against worshipping on Sunday, the Lord’s day by telling them that Constantine the Great in (A. D. 321) changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. But there is no greater misrepresentation of the truth been taught than the idea of Sunday observance originating with Constantine. It originated **WITH CHRIST**. And his apostles and Christians perpetuated it for three hundred years before Constantine accepted it. Sabbatarians are the guilty party for changing the day of worship, from the Lord’s day or first of the week to Saturday.

From the day of Pentecost down to this present day, Christians met on the **FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK** (or Lord’s day) in memory of their resurrected Lord. What an honor it is to worship Him on His **DAY**, the beginning of all days.

In my next article I will give historical and Biblical proof for worship on Sunday (The Lord’s Day).

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

There are many people saying that the Bible does not have much to say about the first day of the week but this is not true. Please notice what the Bible does say about it.

1. That Jesus Christ arose from the dead on the first day of the week (Mark 16:1-9; Luke 24: 1, 13, 46).
2. That on the first day of the week he was declared to be the Son of God with power (Rom. 1:4).
3. That he met with his disciples repeatedly on the first day of the week between his resurrection and his ascension (John 20:1, 19, 26).
4. That Pentecost came on the first day of the week (Lev. 23:15). Hence, all the events of the second chapter of Acts, the birthday of the church, took place on the first day of the week (Acts 2:1).
5. That the Holy Spirit imbued the apostles on the first day of the week and began his mission of conversion (Acts 2:1-4).
6. That the first gospel sermon proclaiming Jesus

as the Son of God was preached on the first day of the week (Acts 2:22-36).

7. That three thousand souls, the first fruits of the gospel harvest (Lev. 23:17), were added to the church which began on that Pentecost, the first day of the week (Acts 2:41, 27).
8. That the church assembled on the first day of the week to break bread, to observe the Lord's supper, and other items of New Testament worship (Acts 20:7; Acts 2:42; I Cor. 11:23, 33; 16:2; Heb. 10:25).
9. That in the New Testament we have the following new things: (1) A new covenant (Heb. 8:13; 10:9-10). (2) a new institution — the church — (Eph. 1:20-23; Col. 1:18; 2:10; (3) a new set of ordinances — commandments — (I Cor. 11:2; 14:37). (4) a new day — the first of the week (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:1-2; (5) a new word to express the new day — *Kuriakos*, "Lord's Day," a word which was never used before (Rev. 1:10).

Yet in the face of all these scriptural facts some people still cling to the sabbath. If anybody is confused about the terms Saturday and Sunday, just remember that these are purely calendar terms and do not affect the principles involved at all.

Beloved, when you check these scriptures you will find that all of the statements are true.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT DOCTRINE

Doctrine “is the principle, belief or dogma of any church, sect, or party.” The New Testament is the **DOCTRINE OF CHRIST** and is the **ONLY** rule of faith and practice of the New Testament church (II Tim. 3:16, 17). A doctrine is a seed that bears fruit after its kind; Pharisees doctrine produces Pharisees; Sadducees doctrine produces Sadducees; Denominational doctrines produce denominationalists. The doctrine of Christ produces Christians, members of the New Testament church — not members of a denominational church.

Christ received His doctrine from God (John 7:16; 8:28). He gave His doctrine to His apostles and then inspired them to speak and write His doctrine to the church (II Tim. 3:16, 17).

Christ is the author of “The Faith” (His doctrine) (Heb. 5:9; 12:1-3). The doctrine of Christ is not authorized by men. The church is not a legislative body, it is subject to Christ, its head (Eph. 5:23, 24; Col. 1:18). The church has no authority to change the doctrine of Christ. No pope, prelate, priest, nor preacher has the right to change Christ’s doctrine (II John 9; 1:6-19; Rev. 22:18, 19).

The doctrine of men is dangerous (Matt. 15:9; Prov. 14:12). Only the doctrine of Christ is **SAFE!**

The church has been warned not to go beyond the doctrine of Christ, nor to be carried away by strange doctrines of men (Heb. 13:9; Eph. 4:12; II John 9). The church of Christ is to continue in the apostles' doctrine, to give HEED unto it, and teach and ADORN Christ's doctrine by good works and pure speech.

Paul said in II Tim. 4:1-4, "For the time will come when they will not endure SOUND DOCTRINE; but after their own lust shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." Paul charged Timothy to "preach the WORD; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine."

Friends, Christ's doctrine is the ONLY TRUE DOCTRINE! All other doctrines are false and will bring condemnation upon all who follow them.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT THE SEVENTH DAY

Beloved, will you honestly and sincerely study these statements and see for yourself whether they are the truth?

1. That the covenant which included the sabbath commandment was made with Israel only (Exodus 20:2; Deut. 5:15).
2. That Israel was commanded to keep the sabbath because they had been delivered from the bondage of Egypt (Deut. 5:15).
3. That in giving them the sabbath, God used the same day upon which he had rested, or ceased the work of creation (Gen. 2:3; Exodus 28:8-11; 31:17).
4. That the sabbath was not given, or made known, until the giving of the law at Mount Sinai (Neh. 9:13, 14; Ezek. 20:1-12).
5. That the sabbath was a sign between God and the children of Israel (Exodus 31:17; Ezek. 20:12, 20). If all nations were commanded to keep the sabbath, how could it have been a sign between God and one nation?
6. That the old covenant made with Israel when

they came out of Egypt, which included the Ten Commandments (I Kings 8:9, 21) would be abrogated (Jer. 31:31) and superseded by the new covenant (Heb. 8:6-13; 10:9).

7. That the law which was “written and engraven on tables of stone” was done away in Christ (II Cor. 3:6-14).
8. That the law of “the handwriting of ordinances” was “nailed to the cross,” and the sabbath, therefore, was no longer binding upon even the Jews themselves (Col. 2:14-16).
9. That Hosea, the prophet, declared the sabbath with all other Jewish observances, would cease when the Gentiles should become the people of God (Hosea 2:11, 23).
10. That the apostle Paul declared the sabbath, with all other Jewish observances, did cease at the cross, and that we should let no man judge us in respecting them (Col. 2:14-16).
11. That Christians are expressly said to be delivered from the law containing the Ten Commandments (Rom. 7:4, 6, 7).
12. That those who would be justified by the law given at Sinai are severed from Christ and fallen from grace (Gal. 4:24-31; 5:1-4).

Beloved, that is what the Bible says about the law containing the sabbath commandment — the seventh day sabbath. There is not a man that lives that can successfully deny these plain Bible truths.

CRUCIFYING CHRIST AFRESH!

Today the world is filled with turmoil and strife and confusion in the religious world. There are all kinds of error being taught. No wonder our young people are confused and in doubt. Instead of putting the blame where it should be, they are blaming God and his divine Word. They are crucifying Christ afresh!

In Acts 3:13-17, we read “And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance you did it, as did your rulers.” Ignorance of God and his divine Truth was the cause of Christ’s crucifixion and is the cause of all religious error today. Paul says in I Cor. 2:8, “Which none of the princes of this world knew; had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.” People today would not do what they are doing if they understood the consequences of their error. Ignorance crucified Christ on Calvary and ignorance is crucifying Him today afresh.

Paul the apostle said that when he was persecuting Christians he did it in unbelief — listen to him. “Who was before a blasphemer and persecutor and injurious; but I obtained mercy because I did it IGNORANTLY in UNBELIEF.”

If people today do things and say things against Him or His divine Word, they are guilty of the same sin. Those who deny the VIRGIN birth deny that the Bible is absolute TRUTH and at the same time deny

the AUTHORITY of Jesus Christ. They also teach that there is nothing to DO to become a Christian. Christ said that one must believe (John 8:24; Heb. 11:6) must repent (Luke 12:5; Acts 17:30-31) and be baptized (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). People scoff and make fun of doing these things. They also scoff and belittle the idea of meeting on the Lord's day, the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:1-2). When they assembled together on this day, they were to preach the Word of God; eat the Lord's supper; sing praises to God; pray; and to give of their means. Therefore, those who deny and teach that these things are not essential are ignorant and are blasphemous against Jesus Christ and His precious Words and have put Christ to an open shame.

In Heb. 6:6, we read, "If they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance, seeing they CRUCIFY to themselves the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame." In Heb. 10:24, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is: but exhorting one another and so much the more as you see the day approaching." If Christians do not obey this truth then Paul warns them that they will be willfully disobeying God. "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin" (vs. 26). Verse 28, "He that despiseth Moses' law died without mercy unto two or three witnesses: of how much sorer

punishment suppose ye, shall be thought worthy, who had trodden under foot the Son of God and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace?"

Do not let your ignorance crucify Christ afresh and trample under foot the blood of Christ, an unholy thing.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT OBEDIENCE?

If the Bible teaches anything, it teaches that obedience is essential to salvation. Throughout the Old Testament God demanded that men OBEY Him. Notice what He said in I Sam. 15:22, 23 "Behold to OBEY is better than sacrifice." Also in Josh. 24:15 "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." Eccl. 12:13 "To fear God, and KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS for this is the WHOLE DUTY OF MAN." These scriptures are positive proof that man MUST OBEY GOD.

Obedience is taught by Christ and his apostles; let us notice what they say. In Matt. 7:21-28 Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that DOETH THE WILL of my Father which is in heaven." Jesus also says in Luke 6:46, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and DO NOT THE THINGS I SAY?" Again in John 14:15, "If you love me, KEEP my commandments."

A great many religious people want Christ to save them, but will not OBEY Him. Paul tells us that Christ is "The author of eternal salvation unto all them THAT OBEY HIM" (Heb. 5:9). Paul says in Rom. 6:17, "To OBEY from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of

righteousness.” In II Thess. 1:8 “In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that KNOW NOT God, and OBEY NOT THE GOSPEL of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Peter said in I Pet. 4:17 “What shall the end be of them that OBEY NOT THE GOSPEL OF GOD?” According to the apostle John in Rev. 22:14 says, “Blessed are they that DO HIS COMMANDMENTS, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and enter in through the gates into the city.” Therefore, only those that OBEY the Gospel of Christ, and live an OBEDIENT life will be permitted to enter heaven and enjoy everlasting life.

IS MIRACULOUS POWER FOR TODAY?

In our first article, we pointed out that there would arise false teachers, apostles, prophets, and ministers claiming to have the same power that the apostles of Christ had. In II Thess. 2:3, Paul says, "Let no man deceive you." When these so-called healers come into town in the name of religion, everybody flocks to them as though they were God Himself. Most people do not question them, whether they are real or false, whether they are of God or Satan. People ignore Paul's warning. **LET NO MAN DECEIVE YOU.**

The article pointed out also that miraculous signs and wonders performed by the apostles were to confirm their message, the word of God (Mark 16:14, 17-20; Heb. 2:3, 4). Therefore, the divine Word of God; the gospel of our salvation has already been **REVEALED** and **DEMONSTRATED** and **CONFIRMED** and **NO NEW** religious truths are being revealed now or is needed. The **TRUTH** already revealed requires no added confirmation. Therefore, these miraculous powers have ceased (I Cor. 13:8).

In the beginning, God created the world and all things by his miraculous power. After all things were created, God placed within all living things seeds that they would reproduce after its kind. No need of more miracles. Also, in the new creation of the church or establishing of his kingdom there was need

of the miraculous power. After the church or kingdom was established, and the gospel confirmed (Mark 16:17-20), there was no need of miraculous power. God's divine word is the SEED of the kingdom and it will produce after its kind (Luke 8:11; Rom. 1:16, 17; Heb. 14:12; I Pet. 1:22, 23).

Jesus, in Matt. 13:18, reveals the meaning of the parable of the sower. The sower went forth to sow — to sow what? — the seed of the kingdom — the gospel. When that seed is sown into the heart it produces children of God. It doesn't take a miracle to produce a wheat or cotton crop. All that it takes is preparation and planting the seed and a harvest is reaped. This is true in producing Christians. It doesn't take a miracle to make a Christian. Sow the seed of the kingdom (the gospel) Mark 16:15, 16; Rom. 1:16, 17, into the hearts of men and it will bring forth after its kind.

Therefore Christ commanded the apostles to "And said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized SHALL BE SAVED; but he that believeth not SHALL BE DAMNED" (Mark 16:15, 16).

THE NEW TESTAMENT CONVERSIONS

In all eight cases of conversions all were “justified by faith” (Rom. 5:1), but not until their faith was strong enough to OBEY the terms of the Great Commission, which Christ gave to His apostles (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16). The final command which is BAPTISM. Hence, when the jailer had been baptized, it is said that he rejoiced greatly, “having BELIEVED in God” (Acts 16:34). What proved his belief? His OBEDIENCE to the terms of the Commission. Christ “became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that OBEY Him” (Heb. 5:9). Hence, in all conversions to Christ “faith without WORKS (obedience) IS DEAD” (Jas. 2:26). All the conversions recorded in Acts obeyed Christ’s stipulations in the Commission, and nothing more, because inspired men preached that, and nothing more. No matter what may be stated in the New Testament regarding salvation or justification “by faith,” “by grace,” etc., the cases of conversions show HOW PEOPLE WERE SAVED by both grace and faith. Does anyone suppose the conversions were WITHOUT either grace or faith? Of course not. Well, then, will they explain to us HOW people are saved or justified BY GRACE and BY FAITH, as inspired men understood and interpreted that teaching? In every instance, salvation “by grace” and “by faith” came to those who OBEYED THE TERMS of Christ’s Commission; and in no instance did the preacher leave his prospect UNTIL HE BAPTIZED HIM

because BAPTISM was stipulated by Christ in the Commission, and inspired men were loyal to Christ's authority. The Commission had stipulated, "He that believeth AND IS BAPTIZED shall be saved" (Mark 16:16), and no preacher loyal to Christ's authority would dare to offer salvation to any believer who is NOT BAPTIZED. Hence the immediate baptism, even at the same hour of midnight (Acts 16:33); or on the desert highway (Acts 8:38, 39), of ALL penitent believers. What representative of CHRIST would dare leave a penitent believer OUT OF CHRIST and UNSAVED — not "BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST" (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27), "IN WHOM we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14)? No preacher of the gospel will ever pronounce an UNBAPTIZED person SAVED. False teachers do this.

It is not possible to be converted to Christ, when His authority in the Commission, and that Commission's interpretation by His Own inspired teachers, are completely SET ASIDE and SUPERSEDED by a purely HUMAN LAW. You may know assuredly, that when you see alien sinners who want to be saved, STOPPED ON THE WAY and told to PRAY for pardon, you are witnessing a HUMAN "system of salvation" that is wholly UN-CHRISTIAN and God-defying; and God saves no man who defies his law and presumes to FORCE HIM to save people by a man-made system. When penitent believers are NOT told to "arise and be baptized and WASH

AWAY YOUR SINS, calling on the name of the Lord,” as Saul was (Acts 22:16), but ARE told to GET DOWN AND PRAY instead, they are being influenced by “men that speak lies” (I Tim. 4:2), whose one purpose is to PREVENT the salvation of the man they profess to be leading to Christ. BE-LOVED beware of false teachers.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT CHRISTMAS?

As one studies the Bible it is immediately apparent that the word "Christmas" is not found in its holy pages. Nor can one determine when Christ was born. It is universally admitted by Bible scholars that no one knows when He was born. It is unlikely that the shepherds would have had their flocks in the open field at night (Luke 2:8) in December. So His birth might have been in July, or in some other time.

We are happy that men remember Christ in some way at any time. However, we honor Christ more truly if we remember Him in the way that He directed. And He said, when instituting the Lord's supper, "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). Yet many will fail to remember Christ in His appointed way each Lord's day (Acts 20:7) but will celebrate religious seasons of human invention, such as Christmas, Easter, and Lent.

Some Christians in Galatia began to celebrate unauthorized religious seasons, and these were rebuked by Paul (Gal. 4:9-11). We are told to abide in the teaching of Christ, and not to go beyond it (II John 9). The teaching of Christ does not include Christmas. Paul says that the Word of God is complete. "All scripture given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the

man of God may be perfect (or completely), thoroughly furnished unto ALL GOOD WORKS" (II Tim. 3:16, 17). Friends, you can search from now until the end of the world and you will NOT FIND anything in the Bible about Christmas!

Where did Christmas originate? It is a human invention, a tradition of men, tracing its origin, not to God's word but to Rome, hence "Christ-Mass." Christ said "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," (Matt. 15:9). Paul also says, "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances (touch not; taste not; handle not; which are all to perish with the using); after the commandments and doctrines of men?" (Col. 2:20-22). It seems that many people will accept anything that comes in the name of religion, without examining to find out whether it has been authorized by the word of God. Paul and the other writers of the Bible plainly and positively teach for all to PROVE the things they accept in religion, as John said, "Try the spirits (or teaching) whether they be of God" (I John 4:1).

Beloved, just because it is taught by man as religious does not make it right. For there are many things in religion that are not from God but men.

Let us love one another. Let us give gifts. Let us be thankful that Christ was born. Let us sing praises to God. Let us do all of these things, not seasonally, but stedfastly, "always abounding in the work of the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58).

WHAT CONSTITUTES THE NEW BIRTH?

Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus points out the necessity of the New Birth, which no sensible person would deny. Jesus said, "Except a MAN be born of water and the Spirit he CANNOT enter the kingdom of God." NOTICE! Jesus said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, you SHALL NOT enter the kingdom of God." In verse 4 Christ says that a little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Chapter 19:14 Jesus said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: (NOTICE) for of such is the kingdom of God." This settles the matter of little children. Because they are not lost. Therefore they don't need to be baptized.

When Jesus said to Nicodemus "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit," He was not talking about two births. Water in this verse does not mean the natural birth. It takes both water and the Spirit to produce the New Birth! All "noted" Biblical scholars say that the water in this passage refers to water baptism. And this is in harmony with what Jesus Christ and His apostles taught about baptism. Notice what Jesus said in Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is BAPTIZED SHALL BE SAVED." Peter said to the people on Pentecost when they asked "WHAT SHALL WE DO?," "REPENT, AND BE BAPTIZED everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS, and you

shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Peter again says in I Pet. 3:21, "The like figure whereunto even **BAPTISM DOTH ALSO SAVE US.**" In Acts 22:16 Ananias said to Saul, "Why tarriest thou? Arise and be **BAPTIZED AND WASH AWAY THY SINS**, calling on the name of the Lord." Therefore, everyone that rejects these plain and positive teachings of Christ and His apostles does not believe in Christ.

What constitutes the New Birth? (1) Faith in God and His Son (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24). (2) Repentance (Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38; 17:30, 31). (3) Confession (Matt. 10:32, 33; Rom. 10:9, 10). (4) Baptism (Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38, 41).

Beloved, faith **ALONE** will not save! For one can believe in God and His Son and not be saved! Notice (John 12:42, 43; Jas. 2:17, 24). Any preacher that teaches "salvation is by faith **ONLY**" denies what the Bible teaches. For there is **NO SUCH** statement found in God's word! If so where is it? Friends, the Bible does teach that one is **NOT** saved by faith **ONLY** (Jas. 2:17, 24). "Even so faith, if it hath works, is dead, being **ALONE.**" Verse 24 says, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by **FAITH ONLY.**" Then one can be saved without love, the blood, repentance, and obedience to the gospel. Do you believe it? I don't for my Bible teaches me that **ALL THESE THINGS** are essential to one's salvation. Man **MUST OBEY** Christ's will to be saved. For he is the author of eternal salvation

unto ALL THEM THAT OBEY HIM.” Also read Matt. 7:21, 28. Friends, why not be honest with God and with yourself, and OBEY WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES?

BEWARE OF FALSE TEACHERS

Across our land a cult of false teachers is working unceasingly to destroy and eliminate faith in the age-old foundation doctrine of the Bible. These men don clerical robes, stand in the pulpits and Bible classrooms and teach that the Bible is not the inerrant book from God: that Jesus was not the Son of God; that he was not born of a virgin; that he performed no miracles; that his death accomplished no more than Lincoln's and that he did not rise from the dead. These theologians and ministers (?) are denying those great principles "most surely believed" by all God-fearing people through the Christian age. It is expected that avowed atheistic infidels would thus teach, but it is shocking that men claiming to be Christians and teachers of Christianity would thrust the dagger of skepticism into the very heart of the gospel. Truly they are wolves in sheep's clothing, false teachers, emissaries of Satan and should be marked for what they really are.

How strange it is when people get disappointed in religion. They put the blame on God, or at least His word. There is a new sect or cult that has arisen that calls themselves "Jesus People." These people deny the relevancy of the Bible, the established religion of Jesus Christ — the church Christ purchased with His precious blood (Acts 20:28), with its organization of elders and deacons (Phil. 1:1). They seem to find fault with what has been taught and practiced

in the past. So now they have started their own religion. They will have nothing to do with organized religion, but have organized themselves to fight all established religion. They claim to preach Jesus and at the same time deny that Christ has a law, or commandments to obey. The Hebrew writer tells us that "Christ is the author of eternal salvation unto ALL THEM THAT OBEY HIM" (Heb. 5:9). Not to those that just believe!

They have a lot to say about love, but don't know what love is. Jesus said "If ye love Me, you WILL KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS" (John 14:15, 21, 23). Love is more than merely saying the word over and over. True love will not reject anything Jesus taught. It will not DISOBEY Christ's law or refuse to DO His will. Jesus said, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, or Jesus, Jesus, and DO NOT THE THINGS I SAY" (Luke 6:46).

Paul said to the elders at Ephesus when he met them on the island of Crete, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw disciples after them" (Acts 20:29, 30). This was true in Paul's day and is true today. Why? Because people want to do their own thing and not be governed by any rules. They don't want any body telling them what the Lord's will is. Not even the Lord Himself! Jesus invites all to come to Him by DOING His will and He will save them (Matt. 7:21, 24-27).

A CHALLENGE!

BELIEVING THE CHURCH OF CHRIST TO BE A RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION ESSENTIALLY INDEPENDENT OF EVERY DENOMINATION IN THE RELIGIOUS WORLD, WE VERY RESPECTFULLY CHALLENGE A COMPARISON OF IT WITH MODERN DENOMINATIONALISM. THEREFORE, WE UNHESITATINGLY AFFIRM:

1. That in spite of all the contradictory creeds and competitive churches among us, there is still in our midst and absolutely independent of all denominational affiliation, the original and true church of Christ: and that there is not now, and never has been, any lawful excuse for belonging to any other church.

2. That this Divine institution — the church of Christ — flourished in perfect organization and effectual work — complete in organic and administrative detail — hundreds of years before any religious denomination was born; which fact proves its absolute independence of all denominations; and that it neither included them, or needs to include them now.

3. That the church of Christ, fully measuring up to its divine mission on earth prior to and in absolute independence of the denominational creations, establishes the stubborn truth that the denominational creations themselves are related to the church of Christ solely as parasites: they voluntarily attach

themselves to, and shall be indignantly stripped from, the church, without affecting in any manner the nature or value of the true church.

4. That the church of Christ was, and still is, the one body of Christ, consisting of all members (Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18, 24; Rom. 2:4, 5; I Cor. 12:12, 20, 27); and if all His members were “complete in Him” (Col. 2:10) — in His Body, the church — in the absence of all denominations, the members of that church today would be just as “complete” if every denomination should suddenly cease to exist. If Christ’s members are complete (lacking in nothing) in Him without denominational affiliation, what is a denomination for anyway?

5. That, it being the Body of Christ, the church essentially includes every member of Christ — everything truly Christian; but the church or body of Christ is absolutely independent of all denominations, as we have seen. There can be no such thing, in truth, as a “Christian denomination.” To be truly “Christian,” a thing must be authorized by Christ . . . Therefore, all things not authorized BY CHRIST are sinful (II John 9, 10).

WAS THE CHURCH BUILT ON PETER?

Jesus asked His disciples, "Who say ye that I am?" Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed art thou ... and I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church . . . I give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:15-19).

If one reads this passage in the original Greek he will read the words as follows: "Thou art Petros (masculine a stone) and upon that very rock, (petra, feminine, a ledge of rock) I will build my church . . . I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

So Christ was not founding the church upon Peter, but upon the great solid rock ledge of TRUTH that Peter had just confessed, that is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus did not tell Peter that the church was to have Peter for its foundation, but he did tell Peter that he was to be given the keys of the kingdom with power to bind and loose as had been done in heaven.

The keys of the kingdom were used by Peter

and the other apostles to open the doors of the church. In Peter's great sermon in Acts 2, he told the great multitude to "repent ye, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and he shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." About 3,000 Jews obeyed and the Lord added them to the church. Later, Peter used the keys to admit Gentiles as recorded in Acts 10.

The power of binding and loosing was not given only to Peter but to all apostles (Matt. 18:18; John 20:22-23). They taught as they were inspired of God and their teachings are with us today in the New Testament. It should be noted that this power of binding and loosing was never given to anyone except the apostles, and there is no God-given authority for this power to be passed down to others.

Was the church founded on Peter? "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Which is Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 3:11). Not only is Christ the foundation, but is the Head of the church (Eph. 2:20-23; Col. 1:18, 24). No man has any power or authority to make laws or to do anything that Jesus Christ has not authorized.

The apostles, and none other, were given the power to bind and loose, and that only by the authority of Christ (Matt. 16-18).

The church was built upon Christ (not Peter) and woe is pronounced upon all that try to change or alter its divine law (Gal. 1:6-9).

THE PRICE CHRIST PAID FOR THE CHURCH

That the church of Christ cost His blood; that it is vastly precious to Him and He is justly jealous of it and will avenge all encroachments upon it and counterfeits of it. It is therefore a dangerous piece of presumption on the part of men to create new religious bodies and teach the people to call them "churches of Christ," and offer to their fellow-men membership in them in lieu of membership in the **BLOOD-BOUGHT** church of Christ. It would be a strange piece of parental indifference to the supreme sacrifice of a beloved Son, were the Father NOT to indignantly resent such an affront.

The presumption consists in man's asserting that by his sin-stained hands he can make a church "just as good" as that church made by the immaculate Son of God and sealed and sanctified with His meritorious and efficacious blood. Where is the denomination that does not assert that it is a "church" of Christ? If Christ made the denominations His churches, then their claim would be true but this He does not do. Every member added to a denomination is a triumph of the human spirit over the **SPIRIT OF GOD**; a popularization of the counterfeit over the genuine; an attempt to elevate the bloodless institutions of men above the **BLOOD-BOUGHT** church of Christ. It is a fearful sin to underestimate anything sealed with Christ's blood. This sin is committed by everyone who makes membership in a

denomination equivalent to membership in the church of God; for if the blood of Christ was shed for His church (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:23-28), and men may be sufficiently church-related in some other “church” of what VALUE to such is the BLOOD-BOUGHT church of Christ? With such people, the BLOOD-BOUGHT holds no premium over the bloodless. In such a case, the BLOOD is totally ignored: an institution sealed with it is of no more merit than an institution wholly without it. Is God supposed to “wink at” this sort of thing — by blessing those who ignore Christ’s sacrifice?

That so long as Christ maintains His church on earth there will be no excuse for the existence of denominations; for whatsoever good thing men may do, can be done in His church, where He, instead of men, will get the honor for the good done. The very thing He has commanded of us (Eph. 3:10, 21). They have robbed God’s temple of certain worthy deeds and offered these same deeds upon its own altar and in the name of itself; thus depriving Christ of the honor of the good done, which His church alone, in His NAME ALONE, had authority to do. Paul says “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name (by His authority) of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH RELIGION?

This question is being asked by many people these days. The majority of people don't know the difference in religion and Christianity. Christianity is a religion but it is from God not man. Christianity is built upon facts that cannot be denied by anyone. Which facts are: The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As Paul states in I Cor. 15:3, 4.

Religion can be based upon anything, by anybody. So that's why there are so many different religions in the world. There is about three hundred different beliefs or religions in the world today. And all of them teach different doctrines. Just because a person is religious does not mean that he is Christian! Paul states in Acts 17:23, that the Athenians were too religious. NOTICE what he said, "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him I declare unto you." James also speaks of PURE RELIGION, and tells us what it is. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this. To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jas. 1:27). One cannot read these scriptures and fail to see the difference in Christianity and religion for they point out the TRUE, and the FALSE.

All Christians recognize Christ as the author

of their religion, and that He has ALL AUTHORITY in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). Therefore, He has the sole right to legislate or make laws to govern His people. Any religion that does not accept Christ as its Head, or recognize Christ's authority, and be governed by what He says IS FALSE, and not of God. Christ is not the author of denominationalism, including Catholicism. For none of them recognize Christ as their Head!

The things that are wrong with those religions are that they are of man. This is why there is so much confusion or division in the world today. If man wants to be saved, then, he MUST do away with all the creeds, manuals, confession of faith, catechism, and take the Bible as their ONLY RULE OF FAITH AND PRACTICE. Have a THUS SAITH THE LORD for everything he DOES in religion.

Christ is NOT the author of all the confusion that exists in the religious world today. But is the author of all TRUTH (I Cor. 14:33).

Beloved, it is my prayer that all will consider the things that have been said in this article seriously for it has not been my purpose to ridicule any religion. But it is my aim to get all people to see the need of taking the Bible or the TRUTH above the teachings of men. BELOVED, the Bible is RIGHT and MEN ARE WRONG!

BELIEVING A FALSEHOOD

Faith is an essential condition to salvation and to a life that is well-pleasing to God (Heb. 11:6). So important is it that a person's whole life will be affected by what he sincerely believes to be true (Prov. 23:7). However, there is a world of difference when it comes to the proposition that is believed. For it is a well-known fact that a FALSE REPORT and the FAITH that is based upon it may have the same effect upon a person that would have been produced had the report been true. Too, the reception of a FALSEHOOD may unfit the mind for the reception of the TRUTH (Gen. 45:25-28).

Beloved, just as sure as there are false doctrines in the world (and who would deny it) then it is possible for a person to believe a false doctrine! Jesus Christ has warned man to "take heed what he hears" (Mark 4:24). Inasmuch as Christ's religion is to be taught, man should be SURE that he hears what Christ has taught. Paul says in Heb. 1:1, "God, who at sundry times and divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto US (Christians) by His Son" (Matt. 17:5).

Christ also tells us to "take heed how you hear" (Luke 8:18). Man MUST listen to God's word, whether it pleases him or not (Isa. 55:8, 9). Again, Christ says, "Take heed WHOM ye hear" (Deut. 18:18, 19; Acts 3:22, 23). Therefore, man has no

alternative but HEAR AND OBEY Christ if he wants to be saved.

In Gen. 3:1-24, we have the story of the fall of man. God made man in His image and likeness, then put them in the beautiful garden of Eden to enjoy all of its fruits except the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Satan, the old serpent, came to Adam and Eve and told them a falsehood or he lied to them. God said not to eat of it, for the day you eat of it you shall surely die. Satan said that thou shalt NOT surely die. Friends, Adam and Eve did not heed WHAT they heard – nor WHOM they heard. Now notice the consequence of their believing a falsehood. They LOST their fellowship with God and were driven from the beautiful garden and brought death upon man – caused God's Son to die for man. This was all brought about by a falsehood. We have another example in Gen. 45:25-28. This is the story of the sons of Jacob – how they killed an animal and dipped Joseph's coat in the blood and took it to their father and he thought Joseph was dead. He grieved many days over Joseph. Many years later he found out that Joseph was still alive. The twenty-sixth verse says, "And Jacob's heart fainted, he believed them not." Beloved, this story points out what a falsehood will do. Jacob believed this falsehood to be as though it were the truth.

Beloved your soul is too precious for you to accept anything in religion. For it's possible for one

to believe and accept a falsehood and be honest and sincere in doing so, but be lost because it was not the TRUTH. Friends, be SURE that you are obeying God and not man.

IS THE BIBLE CATHOLIC?

In our first article we compared several things that people teach that are not authorized by God's Divine Word. Such as, infant baptism, sprinkling, instrumental music, and bowing before images. These things were not authorized by God and He has warned man of such practices. So now we continue our thought on these things.

1. Paul said he would rather speak five words that could be understood than to speak 10,000 words in a tongue that was not understood. Would he have conducted a service in Latin before a congregation that spoke English? (See I Cor. 14:19).

2. Jesus loved His mother Mary but he taught plainly that every obedient disciple was as dear to Him as His own mother. (See Matt. 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21). Mary was not set forth as one to be worshipped, nor are we taught by the Bible to pray to her, or to bow down before her or her image. We are to worship God.

3. The scriptures foretell that some shall "depart from the faith — forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats." Today, we are seeing this departure in churches that forbid their leaders to marry, and command the abstaining from meat on Friday. (See I Tim. 4:1-3).

4. In regard to religious titles, Jesus said, "Call no man father." (See Matt. 23:9). He also forbade His disciples to be called Rabbi or Master (see Matt. 23:8-12). The use of religious titles is contrary to the plain teachings of the Bible. The great apostle Paul was referred to simply as "brother Paul" (see II Pet. 3:15).

Congregations of Christians are referred to as "churches of Christ" in Rom. 16:16. They exist today, scriptural in name, organization, work and worship. If we can persuade others to forsake religious error and return to Bible ways, God will be pleased. In the language of Paul, "Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" We stand ready to study the Scriptures with anyone who requests it. Questions on Bible matters may be mailed to us. We are ready to engage in private or public discussion with any church leader.

WAS PETER A POPE?

Since there is so much confusion in religion and many false claims have been made it becomes necessary for us to investigate these claims.

Since the entire structure of Catholicism rests upon the premise that Peter was a Pope, this claim will be considered in detail.

Peter did not fit the Papal pattern, because he was married (see Matt. 8:14). In following Christ, Peter "left all" (Matt. 19:27), but he did not leave his wife (I Cor. 9:5). Peter was an elder, as well as an apostle (I Pet. 5:1). It is required that elders be married men with faithful children (Titus 1:6).

Peter did not fit the Papal pattern because he was poor. When asked for alms, he said, "Silver and gold have I none" (Acts 3:6). Peter was unable to pay a halfshekel tax until provided with the money by a miracle (Matt. 17:24-27). He did not dwell in palaces, surrounded by gold and jewels.

Peter did not fit the Papal pattern because he was humble. He would not allow anyone to call him "father," since this was condemned by Jesus (Matt. 23:8-11). The only title he ever claimed for himself was "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 1:1). Peter was never carried about on a throne for throngs to bow down before him.

When Cornelius bowed before him, Peter said, "Stand up, I myself also am a man" (Acts 10:26). Foreseeing the arrogance and pride of false religious rulers who would be powerful, he exhorted elders not to lord it over the church (I Pet. 5:3). He spoke of himself humbly as "a fellow-elder" (I Pet. 5:1) and when he used the term "chief Shepherd" he was referring not to himself but to Christ (I Pet. 5:4).

Peter did not fit the Papal pattern because he did not consider himself infallible. Jesus once rebuked Peter by saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Matt. 16:23). Peter denied his Lord three times. Peter was guilty of a serious error of conduct in which he led others into error. He was rebuked "before them all" by Paul (Gal. 2:11-14). In considering a doctrinal question in Jerusalem Peter was only one of the speakers (Acts 15). It was James, not Peter, (Acts 15:19) who spoke the final word.

Peter did not fit the Papal pattern since he did not teach that he was the head of the church. Peter taught of only one "chief Shepherd" (I Pet. 5:4), and that was Christ. Peter taught that the "stone" and "rock" upon which the church was built was not a man but Christ (I Pet. 2:6-8). This teaching agreed with the conversation Jesus had with Peter (Matt. 16:15-19) where they were not talking about on which man to build the church but the great question Jesus asked was, "Who say ye that I am?" When Peter gave the correct answer, Jesus answered, "Upon

this rock I will build my church.” Since Peter did not consider himself the head of the church, he made no provision for anyone to succeed him.

Beloved, the word of God is right, and it makes no difference what men have to say about it. Paul said, “Let God be true and every man a liar.”

HAS CHRIST'S KINGDOM BEEN SET UP?

The prophets of the Old Testament on many occasions prophesied that the kingdom of God would be established. In II Sam. 7:12-16, and in Dan. 2:44, it says, "And in the day of these Kings SHALL the God of heaven SET UP A KINGDOM, which shall never be destroyed." In Acts 1:6 the apostles ask Christ "Wilt thou at this time RESTORE again the KINGDOM to Israel?"

All Bible scholars and students believe and teach that God was going to establish his kingdom again, according to the prophecies given above, and many more. But the TIME it was to be established is the question. Does it make any difference whether it was, or will be set up? YES, it makes a great deal of difference for all should want to know the TRUTH on this subject as well as all other subjects.

In the gospel of John, Jesus said, "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). May I ask, is the New Birth essential to salvation today? If so, will it put one in the church or kingdom — which? But if the kingdom has NOT been set up, how could one be born into it?

Again in Luke 22:29-30 Jesus said, "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;" NOTICE! "That you may eat and

drink at my table in MY KINGDOM.” NOW my friends, IF the kingdom has not been established then the religious world has **ROBBED** the kingdom of the Lord’s Supper and put it in the churches! But, beloved, Christ’s kingdom has been established. For the apostles used the keys of the kingdom on the day of Pentecost to open its door, and three thousand were added to it (Matt. 16:19; Acts 2:47). Philip the evangelist went down to Samaria “preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women.” Again in Col. 1:13 Paul said that the Colossians had been “Delivered from the power of darkness, and **HATH** been translated into the **KINGDOM** of His dear Son.” Again in Heb. 12:28 Paul said that those people had “**RECEIVED** a **KINGDOM** which cannot be moved.” The apostle John while on the isle of Patmos said, “I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and **IN** the **KINGDOM** and patience of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 1:9).

Beloved, I am sure that all can understand that it would be impossible for people to be in the **KINGDOM** if it has **NOT BEEN SET UP**, or **ESTABLISHED** as some people teach.

Beloved, the Bible is right, and the opinions and theories of men are wrong. If all people would **JUST** believe and teach what the Bible teaches on all subjects there would not be all the confusion and division that exists in religion today.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT SALVATION?

Today there is confusion in the world about religion with some teaching one thing and others teaching something different. With over two hundred different churches, and each one teaching diverse doctrines, how can one be sure which is right? No wonder the churches are in such a turmoil and strife. What is the answer to this problem?

There is one, and only one answer. **BACK TO THE BIBLE.** Therein the answer will be found. Jesus Christ said: "And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my CHURCH; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). Did Christ build His church as he promised, and is that church in the world today? Yes, and His church has been in the world since Pentecost. For Luke said that "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). Notice, the Lord added those who obeyed what Peter commanded to His church, not to some denomination. The Bible teaches that the Lord has only one church, of which He is head (Eph. 1:22, 23; I Cor. 12:20). If people today would be satisfied with what the Lord teaches in His word, and what the Holy Spirit led the apostles to write in the Bible, there would not be any confusion about the church or religion.

When the people on the day of Pentecost heard

the glorious gospel of Christ preached for the first time, they said to Peter and the other apostles, "What shall we do?" Peter told them to "Repent and be baptized EVERY ONE OF YOU in the name of Jesus Christ FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS" (Acts 2: 38). "THEN THEY THAT GLADLY received His WORD were BAPTIZED: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And the Lord ADDED to THE CHURCH (His church) daily those that were being saved" (Acts 2: 40, 47). Therefore, if people would be satisfied to do just what the inspired apostles taught the people on the day of Pentecost, it would solve all the confusion in the religious world today.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT THE CHURCH?

The church that is described in the New Testament is Divine because God is its designer. Christ is its Builder, and Purchaser. In Matt. 16:18 "Upon this rock (the confession that Peter had made) I will build My church." The church is the spiritual body of Christ (Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18). It is the body of penitent believers in Christ (Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38-47; Gal. 3:26, 27).

The New Testament church is not a denomination, for it existed long before any denomination was born, neither are denominations branches of Christ's church. They are but products of men.

The Lord's church is not some building that man erects, but the church is the Lord's "Called out." Called out of what? It is composed of sinners who were "called out" of sin (Luke 5:32; Acts 2:41, 47; I Cor. 6:9-11). Of devout Jews who were "called out" of Judaism, to the religion of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:5, 41, 47; 3:25, 26). Of Gentiles who were "called out" of darkness into his marvelous light (Acts 10:34, 35; 11:18; I Pet. 2:9, 10). Of idolatry to serve the living God (I Thess. 1:9; I Cor. 12:2; Acts 17:22, 31). Today sincere, truth-seeking souls are "called out" of denominationalism. John, in Rev. 18:4, said "Come out of her my people."

The New Testament church is a “DIVINE” institution built by the Divine Son of God. He is its Head (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22, 23); its Law giver (Jas. 4:12); its Savior (Eph. 5:23); and its Redeemer (I Pet. 1:18, 19).

Why belong to a denomination? Christ has only one church, and salvation is in his church (II Tim. 1:10). So why not obey the Lord and let him add you to his church (Acts 2:47)? For there is no such thing taught in God’s word about joining the church of your choice! Don’t be deceived by man’s teaching.

WHEN WAS THE LAW GIVEN?

This is a pertinent question for Sabbatarians who teach that the law was given at the beginning, which they cannot prove. It is true that God rested on the seventh day. In Gen. 2:3, “and God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God had created and made.” But it is nowhere stated that God commanded man to rest on the seventh day. In fact, for the first 2500 years there was no command given to “remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.” Therefore, from Genesis to Exodus, the Bible is just as silent as the tomb on this subject. Notice what Moses says in Exodus 19:20, “And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai” — “and God spake all these words saying, I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee (Israel) out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Exodus 20:1-2). Notice the words of Neh. 9:13, “Thou camest down also upon Mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven and gavest them right ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments.” These scriptures teach that God gave the law at Mount Sinai, not in the beginning.

In Deut. 5:2-3, “The Lord our God made a covenant with us, in Horeb. The Lord made NOT this covenant with OUR FATHERS, but with us, (Israel) even us, who are all of us HERE (not at the beginning) ALIVE this day.” Moses plainly states

that God did not give the law to their fathers which would include Noah, Abraham, and all the other patriarchs, but to the Israelites that were gathered before Mount Sinai. How can an honest person deny these plain statements?

Paul teaches this same lesson in Gal. 3:16, 17, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made." (What promise?) The promise that God made that in Abraham would all the nations be blessed. He said, "And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed which is Christ." "And this I say, that the covenant, (new covenant) that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, (decatalogue), which was four hundred thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise to none effect." Paul states here that the law was added to the promise God made to Abraham, four hundred thirty years later. This is positive proof that the law was not given at the beginning. "For if the inheritance be of the law (ten commandments) it is no more of promise. But God gave it to Abraham by promise." 19th verse — "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was ADDED because of transgression, TILL the seed should come, to whom the promise was made, and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator."

Beloved, if the law was in the beginning, HOW could it be ADDED later?

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH AND ITS PURPOSE

I believe that the idea of creating the church originated in the mind of God. For it was prophesied in the Old Testament, in Isa. 2:2, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." The house of God, spoken here by Isaiah is the church of the New Testament. Let me quote I Tim. 3:15, "But if I tarry long that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the HOUSE OF GOD, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Therefore, from these scriptures we learn that the church (or house of God) was a part of God's eternal purpose, as Paul also teaches in his epistle to the Ephesians in 1:9, 10 and 3:9-11. If the church of the New Testament was part of God's eternal purpose, then it was not an accident, nor an "after thought" on God's part as a result of the Jews rejecting Christ as their king, as I have heard some people teach. They say that God had planned to establish the kingdom but because the Jews did not accept Christ He changed His mind and

built the church instead. This is not so, God did not substitute the church for an earthly kingdom, nor anything else. The church and the kingdom are the same institution, for Jesus says in Matt. 16:18, "Upon this rock I will build my church," in the verse following He says that "He would give the keys of the kingdom of heaven to the apostles." Do you think Christ would build his church and then give the keys of the kingdom to the apostles if they are two distinct and separate institutions. Christ would not do such a foolish thing as that. Therefore, the church and the kingdom are the same. The church has an important place in the scheme of redemption, the death of Jesus and the establishment of the church were "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Eph. 3:11).

After man sinned in the garden of Eden God purposed (or planned) to build the church that he might save mankind. The church is spoken of by different names in the New Testament. It is called: the house of God; the family of God; the kingdom of Christ; and the temple of God. I am sure the titles or names of the church which I have just mentioned are sufficient to show the importance of it. Yes, the church has a purpose in the world. I do not believe that God would sacrifice his Son, or that Christ would shed his precious blood for the church if it did not have a purpose in the world. Let me ask these questions. What was God's purpose in establishing the church? Is it necessary to salvation? Can

a man be saved outside of it? If so, then it is not essential to salvation, there would be no purpose in it. Paul says in Eph. 1:10, "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in ONE . . . one what? (body) all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in Him . . . in whom? (Christ) also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." From these verses we learn that the purpose of God was TO GATHER TOGETHER (or to reconcile) both (Jew and Gentile) unto God in one BODY. To be in the body is to be in the church, for the church is his body, as we read in Eph. 1:22-23, "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the CHURCH WHICH IS HIS BODY, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all." The church is also called the bride of Christ. Will Christ save His bride? Certainly, in the fifth chapter of Eph. 5:23-25, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and He is the SAVIOUR OF THE BODY. Husbands love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it." If Christ is the Saviour of the body, the church, then the purpose of the church would be to save men. We read the 26th and 27th verses of this same chapter, "That He might sanctify and cleanse IT with the washing of the water by the word, that he might present IT to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that IT should be holy and without

blemish.” I do not know of anything that should encourage men and women to be a member of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ than these verses I have just quoted. Are you a member of this glorious church? The purpose of the church is not only to save men, but it is also to make known the wisdom of God or to preach the gospel to the lost, and in doing this, God is glorified through the church. The church was not established for the purpose of entertaining people. It should not be in show business. Neither is it the purpose of the church of promoting social activities, or of promoting athletic contests. It is not a recreational center. The purpose of the New Testament church was to be: Subject to its head, Christ; a soul-saving institution; a people for the Lord’s name; a glorious people; the house of God; the true worshippers; the pillar and ground of truth; the care-taker of God’s poor; the light of the world. What a glorious work this is. It cannot afford to be contaminated with the things of the world. It must be kept pure from the teaching of men.

If the church is kept pure as it should be, then, and only then can it fulfill the purpose of God. God’s eternal purpose in establishing the New Testament church was to save the souls of men as I have already shown. This is the noblest of all missions. The church is the only institution in the world that has a right to preach the gospel of Christ. “The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone

that believes it.” Therefore, it must be preached. When the unadulterated word of God is preached, and men and women believe and obey it they are saved or added to the New Testament church. This is the way that God gathers together into one body all things in Christ. The church that fails in this word fails in the work that God has ordained for it to do. I believe that the New Testament church is the greatest institution in the world. It is the greatest because it was ordained of God for the purpose of preaching the gospel to save men. One of the best ways to find out the purpose of the church is to go to the very beginning of it. It began in the city of Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Three thousand precious souls were added to it, as we read in the second chapter of Acts the 41st verse, “Then they that gladly received the word were baptized and the same day there were added unto them three thousand souls.” The 47th verse reads “Praising God and having favour with all the people, and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” In the third and fourth chapters we have a record of the apostles, Peter and John entering into the temple, preaching the word of God. Five thousand more precious souls were added unto the Lord. And in the eighth chapter we have a record of the great persecution that arose and the “Christians that were scattered went every where preaching the word.” Men and women were added unto the Lord. Philip went down to Samaria, “Preaching Christ.” Many more were saved.

In studying the history of the apostles, Paul and his preaching of the gospel of Christ, we learn that he was sent out by the church at Antioch on these missionary journeys. From time to time the different congregations in different cities sent to his support. So we can see how the church grew. In fact, the growth of the New Testament church is one of the most marvelous things in history of mankind. The church grew from the smallest of beginnings to become a "great mountain" and fill the whole earth. I ask you kindly to study your Bibles that you may learn what God has to say about this glorious institution and its importance and the purpose it has in the world today. If you are not a member of it, I beg you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to think of the value of your soul and the necessity of being a member of the New Testament church. Remember that Paul said "Christ is the Saviour of the body, the church." He is coming to take it unto Himself. Will you be among that number?

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT THE SPIRIT

The Bible is very plain as to the **WORK** of the Holy Spirit. But it seems that more people are confused on this subject than any other. Just why this is, is sometimes hard to determine. Most of the confusion is brought about because of the false teaching that the Holy Spirit works separate and apart from the word of God, or the truth. This is not true. When we learn **WHY** the Spirit was sent into the world, and how he worked in making known the holy scriptures man will not be so confused.

Beloved, the Holy Spirit was **NEVER** sent into the heart of anyone to save them independently of **TRUTH**. Neither is He the sustaining power. In fact the Holy Spirit is not the power of God, the Bible teaches that the gospel, the word, or the truth is God's **POWER**.

Let us notice John 16:13, "But when He, the Spirit of **TRUTH** is come (the Spirit was to **REVEAL** the truth), He will guide you (the apostles) into all truth; (notice), the Spirit did not speak on his own initiative (power), but what ever He hears He will speak; He will disclose to you what is to come." Now notice verse 14, "He shall glorify me; for he shall **TAKE OF MINE**, and shall disclose it unto you."

Therefore, the Spirit could not function of

Himself, he must be governed by the Father and the Son. The way some people talk about the Spirit implies that the Spirit CONTROLS and makes man do what he wants them to do! This would take away man's responsibility. He would cease to be free to make his own choice. Some also teach that the Holy Spirit MAKES man love God. Their proof text is Rom. 5:5. I have a translation that is about one hundred years old. Let me give you its translation of this verse. "Because the love of God is poured out into our hearts through the Spirit of holiness, which he has given us." You notice very closely the next verse. "For, at that very time when we were helpless; Christ died for the sake of the ungodly. For while hardly anyone would die for the sake of a righteous man — though for a benefactor some might perhaps hazard death — (now notice) "God established His love toward us by Christ dying for our sake when we were still sinners." So, God shed forth, made known, poured forth, and revealed His love, He sent forth His Son into the world to suffer and die for man. Could there be anything given that could make man love God more than this? Isn't it strange that people are not satisfied with God's word. They want Him to send the Spirit into their hearts (not physical) and by doing so FORCE them to be what He wants them to be.

The eighth chapter of Romans does NOT TEACH what many are saying that it teaches. Paul is discussing or contrasting the flesh from man's spirit.

In other words he wants man to know that his spirit **MUST CONTROL** the flesh.

Certainly in order to be a Christian one must let the Spirit teach, or lead him. The Spirit does this by the word of God which he has revealed through the apostles. Man **MUST** comply to, and **OBEY** the doctrine of Christ. You could truly say, the doctrine of the Spirit, or the apostles' doctrine, for all had a part in preaching or revealing it. To say or teach that Christ has **NO** doctrine is to deny what Christ and His apostles taught (John 7:16, 17; Acts 5:28; Rom. 6:17; 16:17; II Tim. 4:3).

People are teaching that God sends forth the Spirit into man's heart and gives him power in some mysterious miraculous way, and it makes him love God, and keeps him from sinning. In other words the Spirit does **EVERYTHING** for man and he does not have to do anything. This sounds good, but it's not the **TRUTH**. For God never does for man what he can do for himself. The Bible plainly and positively teaches that **IF** man does not **OBEY** God and His Son's will, they will be lost.

Christ is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that **OBEY** Him (Heb. 5:8, 9). Therefore man **MUST OBEY** the doctrine of Christ, in becoming a Christian, and **OBEY** Him in worship, and service, and in living a life that is in harmony with His teaching. May God help us all to search the scriptures to **LEARN THE TRUTH** and not to satisfy our own thinking. Jesus said, "**For the TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE**" (John 8:32).

THE NEW BIRTH

There are many hurtful errors taught in connection with the subject of the new birth. Too many people think it is a deep mystery; a theme that can neither be explained nor understood. Let us use the language of the Bible on this subject, a thoughtful study, and learn what the new birth is. Let us take the language of John 3 and study it carefully; study it in connection with other scriptures on the same subject and see if there is anything so difficult about it.

“There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.” Is there anything hard to understand about this verse? I think not. “There was a man” — we can understand that his name was “Nicodemus” — this is easy to understand. He was a “Pharisee” — this refers to his religious belief. In his day there was a religious sect known as the Pharisees, and he was a member of it (Acts 23:7). Then, too, he was a “ruler of the Jews.” This means that he was a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish supreme court, a council made up of seventy-one men, whose purpose it was to try people who had violated the law. This suggests that he was a man of some reputation and ability among the Jews. His position must have been one of honor and responsibility. By John’s reference to him later (John 7:50-52; 19:39), he must have been a very kind man, willing to investigate, and these are commendable traits of character.

Nicodemus "came to Jesus by night." Why, we do not know; the Bible does not say. The truth Jesus gave him that night is the important thing for us to consider. When he came to Jesus he opened the conversation by saying: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Whether Nicodemus was truly honest in this noble confession or using a little flattery to get on the good side of Jesus we do not know. Anyway, he expressed a vital truth concerning the miracles of Jesus. They were to convince any honest person that God was with Christ. Jesus passed by his compliments and went directly to the thing Nicodemus had in mind; namely, entering the kingdom of God. Since "Jesus knew what was in man" (John 2:24, 25), He knew what Nicodemus had in mind, therefore, went directly to the subject of how to become a citizen of the kingdom. Jesus answered and said unto him, "Verily, verily, I say unto THEE, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN, HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD." The thought of the Saviour's language is this: "Nicodemus, the miracles do testify of me, but if you think because you are a Jew and a prominent man among them that you are entitled to a place in my earthly kingdom when it is established, you have it all wrong. The kingdom that I am soon to inaugurate is not an earthly, fleshly kingdom, and YOU will have to be BORN AGAIN to get into it. Your birthright will give you no membership in the kingdom soon to be established."

By the expression, "the kingdom of God," Christ meant the church, that spiritual institution which was soon to be set up by the Lord among men. The "church" and the "kingdom" mean one and the same thing (Matt. 16:18-19; Heb. 12:22, 23, 28).

A fleshly birth introduced Nicodemus into the old Jewish kingdom, a fleshly kingdom; but the Lord's kingdom was to be a spiritual kingdom, and it would take a new birth to put him into this kingdom. One cannot enter this kingdom, the church, unless he is born again, for the condition of entrance as given by Jesus is that "you must be born again." The Jews expected the Messiah to establish an earthly kingdom, one like David's and reign on earth as the king; this is the kind of kingdom Nicodemus had in mind. By the expression, "see the kingdom of God," Jesus means not to see with the natural eye, but to experience or enjoy the blessings of the Lord's kingdom by entering into it.

Since we must be born again to enter into the kingdom, it is impossible to over estimate the importance of the new birth. No one will ever be in the kingdom until he has been born again, for this is the only way to enter into it. It is not that you **SHOULD** be born again, or that it **WOULD BE BETTER** for you if you were born again, but you **MUST** be born again. The rich and the poor, the high and the low, the educated and the uneducated — all alike, must be born again or find no place in the kingdom of God.

This subject is one of vital importance.

“Born again” is figurative language. There is a similarity in some respects to a natural birth. Since one enters into new life in a new realm, or becomes a new creature spiritually, this process is called a birth. In other places in the Bible the change is called “conversion,” “creation,” “forgiveness of sins,” (Matt. 18:3; II Cor. 5:10; Col. 2:12). To be saved or to become a Christian, is what Jesus meant by being born again.

The language of Jesus puzzled Nicodemus. He could not understand how it was possible for an old man, such as he, to experience another physical birth. Hence, he said: “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?” Jesus explained saying: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” He told Nicodemus what the new birth was — HOW it could be possible. (In verse three Jesus expresses the NECESSITY of the new birth; in verse five he tells of what it CONSISTS). It is a birth of water and of the Spirit. There are not two births — only one, but a man must be born both of water and of the Spirit to be born again.

What does “born of water and of the Spirit” mean? Let us take the first: “Born of water” — what does this mean? The word “water” means water. If

not, why not? The way of entering the kingdom of God may be given under the figure of a birth, but that does not mean that the word "water" is figurative. The words "water" and "Spirit" are used literally, if "water" does not mean water, then does "Spirit" mean spirit?

Nearly all scholars understand the word "water" to refer to baptism. This is correct, in fact, **BAPTISM IS THE ONLY THING TO WHICH IT CAN REFER.** It is the only religious act pertaining to salvation, in which water is used. In the Christian system water is **NEVER** used in any ordinance or ceremony except in the act of baptism. Then this makes baptism necessary to the obtaining of all blessings in the kingdom, and that by the authority of Jesus Christ, the highest authority in heaven and earth. Also, it makes the **ACT** of baptism (immersion), a burial and a resurrection (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12). One is dipped in, and comes forth out of the water. Therefore, the expression, "born of water" may be applied to baptism. But a thing cannot be born of that which is smaller than itself. So, how can a man be born of a spoonful of water? The man who has had water sprinkled or poured upon him cannot truthfully say he has been **BURIED** with Christ in baptism. The man who has not been immersed (born of water) is not in the kingdom, for this is a part of the new birth and one must be born again to get into the kingdom.

Paul used a similar expression in referring to the resurrection of Christ. He said Christ was "the first born from the dead" (Col. 1:18). Christ was buried in the grave and from it he came forth — hence, "born from the dead." He was the first to come from the grave to die no more and is, therefore, "the FIRST-born from the dead." If to arise from the grave means to be born from the dead, then the burying in water and the arising therefrom is a birth of water. It cannot mean sprinkling or pouring water ON a person. Hence, one must be BURIED with Christ in BAPTISM that he may be born of water. To be born of water and to be immersed and raised to walk in "newness of life" are identical. "Born of water and of the Spirit" in John 3:5 means baptism! The reason some say that the word "water" does not mean water is because it would make baptism essential to salvation, and they think baptism is not a condition of pardon. According to Wm. Wall, a reliable church historian, John Calvin was the first man to ever say that "born of water" in John 3:5 did not mean baptism, and Calvin confessed that his interpretation was a new one. Therefore, it may be regarded as a settled fact that from the days of Christ to the time of Calvin, to be "born of water" when referred to by all writers, meant to be baptized.

Many quibbles have been made by people in order to get around the obvious teaching of Jesus. Some say the word "water" means the "word," others tell us it means "grace" or "spirit," and others

say, "I do not know what it means, but I know it does not mean 'water'." A common error is the idea that the "birth of water" occurs at the natural birth, and the "birth of the spirit" is the second birth, but this theory does violence to the language of Jesus. Christ said: "Except a MAN be born again, born of water and of the spirit, he, the man born physically — cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The natural birth is NOT the birth of water in John 3:5. Nicodemus had already been born of fleshly parents — a natural birth — and now Christ tells him he must be born again, not physically, but of water AND of the spirit (both) in order to become a citizen of the kingdom of God.

What does the phrase, "Born of the Spirit" mean? This refers to the Holy Spirit. When one becomes a Christian it is according to the Spirit's instruction. One is baptized according to the teaching of the Spirit after he has been made a believer by hearing the Spirit's message the word of truth as contained in the New Testament. Hence, one "born of water and of the Spirit" is a penitent believer, immersed in water and brought forth according to the teaching of the Spirit. When we are thus baptized we enter into the kingdom of God. One hears the voice of the Spirit speaking through inspired men, receives that word into the heart and obeys it, and is born of the Spirit, is "born of water and of the Spirit."

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and

that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Here Christ is still trying to convince Nicodemus that the new birth is not a fleshly birth. Christ was not talking about a birth of the flesh, a natural birth. He had in mind a spiritual birth. Watch carefully the reading: “That which is born of the Spirit (capital “S”) is spirit (small “s”) — meaning “that which is born (begotten) of the Holy Spirit is the human spirit.” It is an inward or spiritual change that takes place. The mind is renewed. The flesh remains the same; our bodies will not be changed until the resurrection (Phil. 3:23; I Cor. 15).

Consequently, Christ said: “Marvel not (do not be surprised) that I say unto thee, Ye must be born again.” The trouble with this ruler of Israel was his failure to realize the existence of the inner man dwelling in the body. This is the subject of the change contemplated by the new birth. The SPIRIT of man is born anew.

Jesus gave this illustration: “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the spirit.”

This is the hard verse of the whole story. It is thought to teach the direct, incomprehensible, mysterious operation of the Holy Spirit in conversion, and that the new birth is a deep mystery, a thing brought about all of a sudden in some way unknown,

and the experience of it is better felt than told.

Please note that Jesus did NOT say: "So is the **DIRECT OPERATION** of the Spirit." The comparison is between hearing the wind and hearing the Spirit. One must **HEAR** the Spirit.

Jesus did not use the illustration concerning the kingdom. The wind cannot be seen, yet we **HEAR** its sound and we see the effects of it. This is true of the Holy Spirit. We **HEAR** the Holy Spirit — hear Him as He speaks through the inspired men. We see the effects of the Spirit's message as it produces obedience in man.

Before the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, many things concerning the Spirit were not known; now they have been explained. Hence, Nicodemus did not know where the Spirit cometh or goeth; we do today. The Holy Spirit came to the apostles (John 14:15, 16; Acts 2) and they spake "as the Spirit gave them utterance." The people heard the apostles — **HEARD THE SPIRIT SPEAK THROUGH THE APOSTLES** — and this message, when believed and obeyed, produced the new birth. Then the real point of the comparison is simply this: just as we hear the sound of the wind, we hear the voice of the Spirit speaking through the apostles, and a man is born again by **HEARING** and obeying the voice of the Spirit. There is nothing mysterious or miraculous about it.

A birth means a translation, a change of state or relationship, and results in a new life in a new realm. By the new birth one is translated into a new environment.

When does this new life begin? Where is that new realm? “Therefore if any man be **IN CHRIST**, **HE IS A NEW CREATURE**: old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new” (II Cor. 5:17). Since we are new creatures in Christ, we enter into the new life when we enter into Christ. But when does one enter into Christ? “Know ye not that so many of us as were **BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST** were baptized into his death; therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in **NEWNESS OF LIFE**” (Rom. 6:3, 4). “For as many of you as have been **BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST**, have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). The man in Christ is born again.

Therefore, baptism is part of the new birth. One is not a new creature — born again — until he gets into Christ, but according to the Bible, one is not in Christ until he has been baptized into Him. The new birth translates one from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of Christ where he obtains the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:13, 14).

In every natural birth there must be the father

who does the begetting. In order to have a natural birth, two things are necessary (1) begetting, and (2) birth, or deliverance. In the spiritual realm, we are begotten of God, our Father, through the gospel, the Spirit's message; then, after being begotten or made a believer, we are born of water (immersed) according to the teaching given by the Spirit. Note these scriptures which show we are begotten by the Father through the word.

1. "Of his (God's) own will begat he us WITH the WORD OF TRUTH, THAT WE SHOULD BE A KIND OF FIRSTFRUITS OF HIS CREATURES" (Jas. 1:18).

2. "Being born again (having been BEGOTTEN AGAIN - A.S.V.) not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, BY THE WORD OF GOD, which liveth and abideth forever . . . and THIS IS THE WORD WHICH BY THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED UNTO YOU" (I Pet. 1:23, 25).

3. "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have BEGOTTEN YOU THROUGH THE GOSPEL" (I Cor. 4:15). This means, "I have made you believers by preaching the gospel to you."

4. "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8: 11). But the Holy Spirit gave the word of God through inspired men. Therefore, when one is

begotten by the word in believing the gospel, it may also be said to have been done by the Holy Spirit. "The WORDS I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). To be begotten and to believe are one and the same thing. "Whosoever BELIEVETH that Jesus is the Christ is BEGOTTEN OF GOD" (I John 5:1). The word (seed) is planted in the heart by hearing. Faith comes by hearing God's word (Rom. 10:17). Being begotten by the Spirit through the word is necessary to being born again. How is a person begotten by the Spirit? By hearing the Spirit's voice — the Spirit's message.

In Paul's sermon at Antioch in Pisidia, he spoke of "the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day" (Acts 13:27). These people heard the prophets; they heard the VOICES of the prophets. How? By hearing the law read every Sabbath day in their synagogues; by hearing the writing of the prophets. And so today we hear the voice of the Spirit by hearing the word of God — the word given by the Spirit through inspired men. This is the way we hear the Spirit today, and this is the only way we hear His voice.

The Holy Spirit was given to the apostles to guide them into all truth, and when they preached, it was the Spirit's message. The people heard and believed — were begotten; and in obedience to the Spirit's command, they were baptized (immersed), and thus became the children of God. "Many of the

Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized” (Acts 18:8). After one has been begotten, he may then be born. “He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood nor of the will of man, but of God” — that is, of the will of God (John 1:11, 13). When one believes, he has the power (the right or privilege) to **BECOME** a son. A person does not become a child of God (saved) the very **MOMENT** he believes. If he were **THEN** a son, power could not be given him **TO BECOME A SON!** We are not saved by “faith only” (Jas. 2:24). The believer becomes a son when his faith working by love, leads him to repent and be baptized as the Holy Spirit commands (Acts 2:38; Gal. 5:6; 3:26, 27).

When one believes with the heart that Jesus is the Son of God, he is begotten of God; and when he is baptized (immersed in water according to the Spirit’s teaching) he is then “born of water and of the Spirit.” The new birth is then completed, and the individual is in the family of God.

IMPOSSIBILITIES OF THE GREAT COMMISSION

The impossibilities of the Great Commission that was given by the Lord Jesus Christ to his chosen apostles. There were two commissions given by Christ, one during his personal ministry and the other after his death on the cross of calvary.

The first one is known as the limited commission. Under this commission Christ sent the twelve and the seventy to preach, but told them not to go "Into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. This commission ended when Christ was crucified on the cross. Therefore, we are not under the limited commission. If we were we could not preach to anyone but the Jews or the Israelites for this commission was to them. But we are under the great commission, the world-wide age-lasting commission given by the Lord Jesus after His resurrection from the dead. I now give you this commission as it is recorded in the gospels. In Matt. 28:18-20 I read, "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." And now I turn and read

Mark's account of this commission (Mark 16:15, 16). "And he said unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." And now I read Luke 24:46-47. "And he said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem."

Thus we have the great commission as given by our Lord to his twelve apostles. He gave them the most sacred charge ever couched in human words or delivered to mortal man. The salvation of the souls of men is the objective toward which all things are bound and toward which everything is converging. The one supreme object to be accomplished is the remission of sins, the saving of men and women, and the increasing of the kingdom of God and his Son, Jesus Christ.

In summarizing the commission given by these different writers we learn that we are to **TEACH** as given in Matthew; **BELIEVE** as given by Mark; **REPENT** as given by Luke; and be **BAPTIZED** as is given by Matthew and Mark. Now let us turn the commission around and look from within. In so doing we learn the impossibilities of the great commission. The first impossibility of the commission is: That one cannot remain at home for the Lord said

GO. Therefore, it is impossible to please the Lord and stay home. In Matt. 28:19 the Lord said, "Go teach all nations," and in Mark 16:15 he said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Thus according to our Lord's teaching we must go into every nook and corner of the earth, into every nation. The next impossibility is: That it is impossible to loaf. The Lord said GO TEACH. I submit to you, friends, that the religion of the Bible is a taught religion; that the Christianity of the "book of God" is a taught Christianity — that is, a thing men learn. Hence, Paul said to Timothy: "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou has learned them." Any system of religion, therefore, that is not based on elementary teaching is unlike the one mentioned and referred to in the Bible. Man stands absolutely unable to direct his own steps. He is launched out upon the great ocean of time, unable by his own inherent powers to steer his mark safe to the harbor. God says, therefore, "I want you apostles when the Holy Spirit shall come upon you to Go and Teach; for it is written, They shall all be taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath learned of the Father cometh unto me."

Another impossibility is that it is impossible under these orders to be in doubt about what to preach or teach. The Lord said preach the gospel. Why preach the gospel? Because it is the power of God to save the sinner. A perverted gospel will not

save anyone, neither will the teachings of men. But it takes the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, for Paul said, the truth, or "the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." But someone asks what is the gospel? The gospel contains facts to be believed, commands to be obeyed, promises to be enjoyed. The facts of the gospel are the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The commands of the gospel are faith, repentance, and baptism. The promises of the gospel are forgiveness of past sins, the gift of the Spirit, and eternal life at the right hand of God after this life is over. I have noted the impossibilities as stated to those that preach the gospel. Now I want to note the impossibilities to the world or to those that are in sin. Is it possible for one to know what to do to be saved? It is impossible for one not to know if he has read the Bible, the word of God, for it is impossible for those to whom we preach to be in any doubt as to what they are to do relative to this preaching. They are to hear, believe, and obey the gospel of Christ. Jesus said in Mark 12:29, "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord." Paul says in Rom. 10:17, "so then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The one that is not willing to hear the word of God cannot know what to do to be saved. In hearing God's word, faith is produced. Paul said in Heb. 11:6, "For without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God

must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Again in John 20: 30-31, we read, “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” Yes friends, we must hear the word of God, we must believe in Christ as the Son of God, and we must obey Christ. In Matt. 7:21, Christ said, “Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” Again I read in II Thess. 1:7-8, “and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

It is impossible for the penitent believer to be in doubt as to what he shall do. The Lord said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Again, it is impossible to be in any doubt as to what names one is to be baptized into, the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But some may say what about Acts 10:47 which reads as follows, “And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.” What does it mean to be baptized in the name of the Lord? It simply means by the authority of Christ, and He said to baptize them into the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

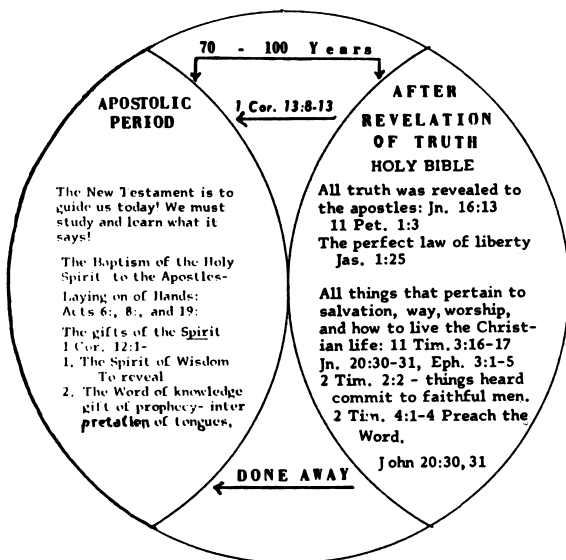
It is impossible for the gospel preacher to be mistaken about what is to be done with reference to those disciples which have been baptized. They must be taught the word of God, they should not be left to perish, but teach them to observe all things whatsoever the Lord has said unto the apostles. Teach them how to live the Christian life, how to worship God in the right way.

It is impossible to be mistaken as to the source of authority by which these duties are to be performed. I am thankful that I do not get my authority from man or any group of men, but my authority is from the Lord Jesus Christ who has all authority in heaven and in earth. It is impossible to be mistaken as to where we should preach this commission or gospel. The Lord said to go into all the world or to every nation. Did the apostles obey the command of the Lord? Let us notice for a moment the work of the apostles after the coming of the Holy Spirit. Remember Jesus told them to "tarry in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." This power came on the day of Pentecost. They (the apostles) were filled or baptized with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the wonderful words of life. They were carrying out the great commission as given by the Lord Jesus Christ. The people were pricked in their hearts and ask what to do to be saved. Peter said, "Repent and be baptized in the name (or by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift

of the Holy Spirit.”

Friends, if you are ever saved it will be when you are willing to obey (or do) just what the Pentecostians did. Won't you consider these things friends? Remember these are the words of the Saviour.

THE COMING AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



3. Faith
4. Gifts of Healing
5. Working of Miracles to confirm
6. Prophecy
7. Discerning of spirits
8. Divers kind of tongues
9. Interpretation of tongue

THE HOLY SPIRIT dwell in the Apostles Personally. ALSO The Holy Spirit by His gifts dwell personally. The Spirit led them into every act of their worship and service to God. This was done by supernatural knowledge.

Today, as never before, we need to take a new look at what the Bible teaches about God, Christ, and especially the coming and work of the Holy Spirit.

The minds of men have been confused with all the opinions and false doctrine of today. People think that unless the Spirit works in a mystical, miraculous influence directly upon the spirit or heart of man, it couldn't be the Holy Spirit. This is NOT so! It behooves us to investigate to find out what the Bible actually teaches about the coming and work of the Holy Spirit.

There is a difference in the work of the Holy Spirit during the apostolic period and after the divine revelation of God's testimony or truth has been fully revealed. This is where the confusion occurs. During the first seventy years of the Christian age, there was no New Testament to guide them, therefore, the need of Divine operation of the Holy Spirit in everything they did religiously. We will prove this later.

Let's ask a question. "What was the purpose of the coming of the Holy Spirit?" In John 14:26 Christ says, "But the Comforter (which is the Holy Spirit) whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Notice also John 15:26, "But when the comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the

Father, he shall testify of me; and ye also shall bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.” Again, we have these words in John 16: 7-13, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away for if I go not away the comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will **REPROVE** the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come he will guide you (apostles) **INTO ALL TRUTH**; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come.”

These scriptures are sufficient to prove beyond any question the work of the Holy Spirit. They plainly teach that the Spirit was to guide the apostles into all truth and bring all things to their remembrance that Christ had taught them. These things were to (1) convict man of sin; (2) of righteousness and of judgment. This was to be done by the twelve apostles as they were speaking as the Spirit gave them utterance. The Spirit told them what to say.

The apostles having received the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5), which was in them and inspired them in every word and action which they performed. Here are other passages which show how the Spirit operated upon the apostles in revealing the

glorious gospel of Christ: (Rom. 15:19; I Pet. 1:12; Eph. 1:13; I Thess. 1:5; Eph. 3:5-9). The apostles were given the great commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every nation (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). The scriptures above show how the Spirit worked in guiding the apostles into all truth. Not only did the apostles receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but they had power to lay their hands on others that they might receive supernatural gifts (Acts 8:18, 19). Let us keep in mind that all this was during the apostolic period. The Holy Spirit was literally in them personally. Some may ask the question, "Were these gifts miraculous, supernatural gifts given to confirm the word only?" No! The gifts of the Holy Spirit had more to do than this. They were necessary to develop the religion as well as to prove it; hence all the diversities of gifts mentioned in I Cor. 12:13, 14. These gifts are classified under two heads: First, those which revealed the religion; and second, those which proved it. The spiritual gifts necessary to teach the religion were: "The word of wisdom," "The word of knowledge," "The gift of prophecy," "The interpretation of tongues," and to these might, in one sense, be added, "The discerning of spirits." To confirm the religion there were: "Faith" or a firm persuasion that they were able to perform miracles; "The gift of healing diseases." "Powers" or the ability to perform such works as Peter did on Ananias and Sapphira, and as Paul on Barjesus; "The gift of foreign tongues," this was necessary to teach all nations and

just as necessary to confirm the word; and the “gift of inworking” or imparting spiritual gifts to others by the imposition of the apostles’ hands.

The churches had gathered together by the proclamation of the gospel. They were either Jews or ignorant pagans and most churches were composed of both. They were destitute of any written revelation. The Old Testament they had not; and, the New Testament was not then written. They required all the spiritual gifts to be bestowed on them in that age.

These churches out of Judea had everything to learn and could not have a single spiritual thought except as they were taught either by inspired men or by the Holy Spirit. Hence, all those spiritual gifts were bestowed on the first converts for perfecting them. They could neither speak in the church, pray, nor sing without supernatural aid. The same wisdom which made apostles out of crude fishermen and hid the gospel treasure in these humble vessels, chose to fill crude barbarians and ignorant pagans with supernatural gifts that the excellency of the power might appear Divine and not human. By the Spirit of God they spake, prophesied, sang, prayed and exhorted. The gifts of discerning spirits was necessary to prevent imposition. Some possessed this gift and therefore the prophets were commanded to speak but two or three sentences at a time that those possessed of this gift might judge whether they spake according to the Spirit of God. There are novices in the

Christian scriptures and religion who cannot discriminate between the order of edification in the **PRIMITIVE CHURCH** while under the guidance of spiritual men from that which was to be the result of that order. "When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part has now ceased; for prophecies shall fail." Prophecies have failed. That which is perfect, the complete revelation is come. We must, then discriminate between the church in her infancy because the apostles have taught us to discriminate. Paul says, "When I was a child I thought and acted like a child" (I Cor. 13:11). To the congregation to whom he expounds the nature and design of spiritual gifts and to the church as a child, the same apostle says, "it pleased Jesus when he ascended to bestow gifts; apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers for the fitting of the saints for the service of the Lord, that they might not continue as children, but grow up by these gifts to the full measure of the Christian stature to full grown men under Christ the Lord."

The literal body of Christ was literally formed by the Holy Spirit. Afterwards that body was filled with the Holy Spirit. So His metaphorical body, the church, was formed by the Holy Spirit in these gifts, and when formed it became the temple of that Spirit. The Spirit is promised only to them who believe. Every body has its own spirit and the body of Christ has the Spirit of Christ.

The Holy Bible is God's complete revelation to

man. It is the only means God uses today to bring man back to Him. God sent the Holy Spirit during the apostolic period to guide the apostles into ALL TRUTH. In John 14:26, "... the comforter which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things." John 15:26, "The comforter, even the Spirit of truth, he shall testify of me." John 16:13, "Howbeit when he the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you (apostles) into all truth." Also Peter said, in II Pet. 1:3, "According as His Divine power HATH GIVEN unto us ALL THINGS that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us unto glory and virtue." Paul, in Eph. 3:4-6 tells us how this was done, "Whereby when you read you may understand my (Paul's) knowledge in the mystery (or secret) of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men as it is NOW revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets (how) by the Spirit, (WHY?) that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body and partakers of His promise in Christ (HOW?) by the gospel." The apostle Peter tells us about the same thing in I Pet. 1:10-12, "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow unto whom it was revealed that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister

the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, which things the angels desired to look into.” In II Pet. 1:20, 21, “Knowing this first that no prophecy of the scriptures is of any private interpretation, for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

The question might arise, “Are the scriptures sufficient to guide man in all that he needs to know to be saved?” This is a very pertinent question — one that should be answered in a way that you should understand it. Inasmuch as we do not have miraculous powers or spiritual gifts we must look to God’s divine revelation to find out what is required of us today. Paul comes to our rescue: II Tim. 3:16-17 reads, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect thoroughly (completely) furnished unto all good works.” Yes, the Bible is complete and absolute and is all man needs without the spiritual gifts or supernatural power. If people would only believe what it says there would be less confusion in the religious world.

Do we have the Holy Spirit? Yes, indeed we do. He does not dwell in us personally today as he did in the apostles and early Christians, on whom the

apostles had to lay hands that they could receive the supernatural gifts. If the Spirit dwells in our hearts personally we would have the same power they had. Paul tells us in I Cor. 13:8 that these things would be done away; verse 8 says, "Charity never faileth, but whether there be prophecies they shall fail; whether there be tongues they shall cease; whether there be knowledge (supernatural) it shall vanish away." We learn from this scripture that these gifts were given for a special purpose: Until that which is PERFECT is come then that which is in part shall be done away. "That which is perfect" in this verse means the complete, perfect revelation of God or the New Testament scriptures. The people during this (apostolic) period had the Spirit of God, or the Holy Spirit to guide them in every act of worship and service to Christ. They had the Spirit of God; we must have the Spirit of Christ.

Is there any difference in Christ's Spirit? Yes, there is. God's Spirit was miraculous. Christ's Spirit is not. What is the effect of the Spirit on man's heart? What are the manifestations of that Spirit? The Bible speaks of the fruit of the Spirit; the fruits of righteousness; and, the fruits of the gospel. Now if we can find what this fruit is we will understand how the Spirit operates today in the hearts of men. Let me point out to you the different phrases such as: "the mind of Christ" (Phil. 2:5). "The mind of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:8-16). In Christ we see the noblest qualities blended into one sublime character.

Look at these: Compassion, tenderness, kindness, forgiveness, humility, courage, goodness, mercy, joy, love, and obedience. These qualities constitute the Spirit of Christ, (Rom. 8:9), and one will produce the fruits of the Spirit. In fact these are the fruits of Christ's Spirit and the fruits of righteousness. To enjoy these and to have them in our life (or heart) we must first be born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5). No one has ever received the Spirit that has not OBEYED the word, or the gospel of Christ.

Is there any way of settling in the public mind on the nature and degree of influence which the Holy Spirit exercises upon the human heart or mind in converting and sanctifying man? Certainly, by the word spoken or written — dictated by that Spirit should and will settle all questions about it.

Is it a power operating directly on the spirit of man without anything between it and the Spirit of God? The answer is NO. God does not work without means. If so then, man can be saved without obeying the word of God, or His gospel, the means He uses to bring man to Him.

Every spirit puts forth its moral power in words that all the power it has over the views, habits, manners, or actions of men. As the spirit of man puts forth all its moral power in words which it fills with ideas, so the Spirit of God puts forth all its converting and sanctifying power in words which it fills with its

ideas by its arguments, expressed by words. This is why the gospel must be preached, for in preaching the gospel man is using the words of God's Spirit to express God's plan to save him.

God does not work directly to man as He did in the apostolic period. Man has no way of knowing what was in the mind of God only as it has been revealed to man (I Cor. 2). Let us remember that all the converting power of the Holy Spirit is exhibited in the gospel or the divine word of God.

The Spirit of God was the author of all the supernatural intelligence, wisdom and power which appeared in the writings and doings of all God's messengers to men; and that He is the author of all genuine goodness in the human heart is quite apparent. All the converting power or saving power which the Spirit of God exerts on the human mind is now in and by the Word written, read or heard. Where this word has never been heard or known not one supernatural idea exists. Not one ray of spiritual or celestial light has shown.

The whole work of the Holy Spirit in the apostles' time was not to originate new ideas, nor to clothe men with supernatural and extraordinary powers, such as: speaking in tongues and languages unknown before or in controlling or suspending the laws of nature; but in strengthening the mind and memory in reviving the recollections of things said

and done in time long past, and reproducing them while he was with them. The coming of the Spirit was to guide them into ALL TRUTH. All true religion is founded upon the testimony or truth of God developed (revealed) and authenticated by the Holy Spirit. Let us remember that all the converting power of the Holy Spirit is exhibited in God's divine word.

The Holy Spirit pleads the cause of Christ by His signs and wonders. All who receive Christ in their hearts receive not the person, but the word and Spirit of Christ. The influence which it exercises upon sinners is, then, the influence of arguments of its words and works upon their understanding; predisposing or opening their hearts to receive the Lord Jesus as the author of an eternal salvation to all who obey Him. When therefore, anyone gives himself up to the Lord and receives Him as his prophet, priest and king, the Holy Spirit dwells in him and sheds its influence of love and peace in his heart. All this is beautifully expressed by the Lord of the Spirit in His epistle to Laodicea. "Behold I stand at the door and knock, If any man hear my voice (my words or knocking) and open the door, I will come in and feast with him and he with me." This is the influence within and the influence upon. The Spirit of Christ, as I understand, never leaves Him. When He is received His Spirit is received; where he is resisted, his Spirit is resisted; where he is rejected, his Spirit is rejected. This is especially now the case for after He is glorified the Spirit proceeded from Him as well as the

Father. Peter says, "The Holy Spirit is a witness for us whom God has given to all who obey Him" (Acts 5:32). The Spirit speaks to sinners, knocks, calls, entreats, but it speaks in the words uttered by the apostles. The Spirit quickens, cheers, animates, gladdens, purifies, and sanctifies the saints, "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of His Son into your hearts." "You are the temple of the Spirit." "I will dwell in them and walk in them." No wonder the promise of the Holy Spirit as a resident in the heart is given only to them who submit to the government of Christ. "I will sup with him and he with me." What a wonderful promise this is.

It is my prayer that when you read and study these things you will have a greater understanding of the coming and work of the Holy Spirit. The whole problem today is misunderstanding these things, and confusion in the religious world causes misunderstanding. When we understand the difference between the apostolic age and the period of revelation we will come to see that He (the Spirit) works by and only through God's eternal truth. Jesus says, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

If the Bible is God's divine revelation and we know that it is, it is the only way God has any communication with man. Why is man not satisfied with what the Bible says? Paul tells us, "For the word of God is quick (living) and powerful and sharper than

any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Again, Rom. 1:16 says, “the gospel is the power of God unto salvation.” This being true man is in danger if he does not follow every precept, (see II Thess. 1:6-9; II John 9; Rev. 22:18-19). These scriptures being true man dare not teach or practice any other religion.

God knows what is best for man. If men will only listen and obey Him, God has promised him an eternal home in Paradise.

IS PREDESTINATION OR FOREORDINATION A TRUE BIBLE SUBJECT?

This subject of predestination has been mis-taught by all the denominations to uphold the doctrine of total depravity (that man was born in sin). They teach that God predestined or foreordained that certain people would be saved, and certain ones would be lost. Is this doctrine taught in God's word? No. According to Alexander Campbell the proper words are: Foreknown; foreknow; foreknowable; and, foreknowledge. This does not say anything about what God knew before He created the world. These two words were coined to uphold this doctrine of total depravity.

Calvin was the first to teach this doctrine. According to him God chose the elect in Christ before this earth was created; "before the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy;" and, that the number of the elect is so fixed and definite that it can neither be increased nor decreased.

The idea that God knew before He created the earth that man would disobey Him (predestined or foreordained) and would sin and have need of a Savior is the language of Ashdod. The Bible no where records anything that God did before the creation. The first verse in the Bible says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." In fact, if any man can find in the Bible a record of any act

performed by God, angel or demon before the earth was created, he can find what I have never been able to find.

In Acts 15:18, we read, "Known unto God, are all His works from the beginning of the world (age)."

If God planned that man would disobey Him, so He could save him, then man was not and is not a CREATURE OF CHOICE, a free moral agent. If God planned it that way then man would have no alternative. In other words, man had to sin for God's will to be done. This is false.

Man is the guilty party. Man being a creature of volition, has the power to make his own choice to obey or not to obey God. Read Deut. 30:19, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you that I have set before you life and death; blessing and cursing; therefore, choose life that both thou and thy seed may live; that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest OBEY HIS VOICE. That thou mayest cleave unto Him: for He is thy life and the length of thy days; that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord swear unto thy fathers, to Abraham; to Isaac; and, to Jacob to give them." Also in Josh. 24:15, "Choose you this day whom you will serve." These scriptures prove that man is a creature of choice, and that he must make up his own mind as to whether he wants to obey God. Therefore, the doctrine of predestination and

foreordination is false.

The scriptures that are used to uphold this doctrine have been misapplied. Let us notice these scriptures:

Luke 1:70 - "As he spake by the mouth of His holy prophets which have been since the world began."

Acts 3:21 - "Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."

I Cor. 2:7 - "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto His glory."

Eph. 1:4 - "According as he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love."

Eph. 3:9 - "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ."

Heb. 9:26 - "For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

When these scriptures are studied in their proper setting we will find that they do not uphold this doctrine. According to Alexander Campbell, a great Greek scholar, the scriptures refer to the Jewish state or age and to the times of the law. Notice what he says:

"Now, that the times under the law were times spoken of here by Paul seems plain from that which he declares to have continued a mystery during those times. To wit: God's purpose of taking the Gentiles to be His people under the Messiah for this could not be said to be a mystery at any other time, but during the time of the Jews were the peculiar people of God, separated to Him from among the nations of the earth. Before that time there was no such name or nation of distinction as Gentiles. Before the days of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob the calling of the Israelites to be God's peculiar people was as much a mystery as the calling of others out of other nations was a mystery afterward. All that Paul insists on here and in all the places where he mentions this mystery, is to show that

though God has declared this His purpose to the Jews by the predictions of His prophets among them; yet it lay concealed from their knowledge, it was a mystery to them. They understood no such thing; there was not anywhere the least suspicion or thought of it, till the Messiah being come; it was openly declared by Paul to the Jews and Gentiles and made out by the writings of the prophets, which were now understood.”

Now I want to use the scriptures. (I am inserting here a translation by a man who lived with the Greeks for forty years and who always read the New Testament in Greek for the same period of years. He was qualified to know and understand their customs and habits before he translated the scriptures). In Eph. 1:3-12, “Let the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be blessed, who has blest us with every spiritual blessing which is in the heavens with Christ; since He had chosen us for Himself before founding a system to be holy and blameless in love before him; having prepared us for adoption to Himself through Jesus Christ according to His settled purpose, in accordance with His glorious gift which He presented to us from love; by which we have the redemption through His blood, the release from sin, coming with the rich gift which He poured into us with all wisdom and intelligence; making known to us the mystery or secret of His intention with His

decision which he had determined with Himself to administer at the completion of the periods, when everything was centered again in the Messiah, both upon the heavens and the earth; in Him, by whom we also inherited according to His purpose who foresees and energizes all things which have been prepared to accomplish the intention of His will; so that we who formerly awaited the Messiah might be an evidence of His honour." This translation is in harmony with all those other scriptures which I gave, which is translated "age" or "aion" from the Greek.

The word "aion" age in other passages also alludes to DURATION. The phrase "since" and "before" the aion (world) Campbell says means "to the conclusion of this state or Jewish age, as I have shown on the chart.

More than sixty times in common version, aion, (age) is rendered by such words as express the longest duration. It also indicates a state of things, or course of arrangement which we sometimes call a dispensation, state, or age. It is found about one hundred times in the Christian scriptures.

We have another Greek word "Kosmos" which is translated "world," but it does not have the same meaning as aion. The word "KOSMOS" translated almost uniformly "WORLD" is found one hundred and eighty-four times in the New Testament and is in some respects very different for aion. Concerning the

word "kosmos" we would notice that it never is in the plural form in the Christian scriptures. There is but one kosmos — though different aions, found in the volume. Kosmos denotes the material globe with all its elements — sometimes the universe; and, by a figure called metonymy, which substitutes the thing containing for the thing contained, the human family is often called the world. God is said to have loved the kosmos but not the aion. The kosmos is said to be founded; but the aions disposed, arranged or constituted. The phrase "foundation of the world" occurs ten times and always is kosmos. Whenever mere time or continuance is implied it is always AION and not kosmos. This is enough to show the difference in these two words. Refer to the chart.

God did not predestine or foreordain that some people would be saved, and some be lost. This would contradict all of God's plan or purpose. God planned and purposed to save man by THE GOSPEL which is His power to save all who obey it (Rom. 1:16). If God saved man in any other way He would be a respecter of persons. God has always used MEANS to save man and he has ONLY two POWERS in the world. They are: physical and moral. Physical power means by force and moral means power by words and arguments. Words are the vehicles upon which ideas or arguments are made. The Holy Spirit used words through and by the apostles to convict men of sin. God does not use miraculous or mystical infusions of His Holy Spirit into the hearts of men to

convict or save them.

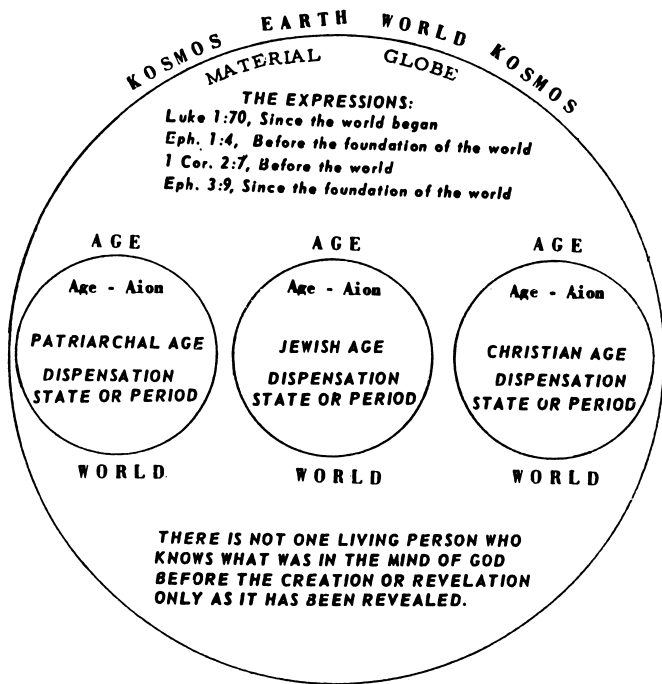
God uses the same means to save each person (all people). That is why Christ sent His apostles out into all the world to preach the gospel (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). For all people are "called," "chosen," "elected" in the same way by the gospel. If they are not, God would be a respecter of persons. Paul says in II Thess. 2:13, 14, "I have called you by the gospel." See also Rom. 10:13-17.

Beloved, all of God's saving power is in the gospel and all people are subject to that gospel. God uses no other means to save man. Friends, if you are waiting for some mystical, miraculous power to come into your heart and save you, you will never be saved. Miracles have never saved anyone; for that was not their purpose. They were to reveal and confirm the word (Mark 16:19, 20; Heb. 2:3, 4).

God through His loving kindness and tender mercy sent His Son into the world to perfect the plan of redemption to save man from sin. Christ perfected that plan by His death, burial and resurrection from the dead and procured salvation for all them that hear, believe, repent, and are immersed into Christ by baptism. Those will be added to that glorious institution, the church. Christ is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him (Heb. 5:8, 9).

Are you one of God's chosen? Having been

elected to salvation by hearing His invitation (Matt. 11:28, 29) and obeying His gospel which is His power to save all who will obey that gospel (Rom. 1:16; I Cor. 15:1-4). If you have done these things you are among the chosen, the elected, and the ones who will inherit eternal life. Having a view of this glorious destiny and perfect union in one body, He urges love and forbearance and an endeavor to preserve unity and peace here and now. He appeals to the fact that they were all in ONE BODY, animated by ONE SPIRIT, inspired by ONE HOPE and ruled by ONE LORD; possessing ONE FAITH, the recipients of ONE BAPTISM; and the children of ONE FATHER (Eph. 4:1-16). Let us obey God's plan to do His will in His way and there will be waiting for us a crown of righteousness in heaven. What more could one want?



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